

# CHRISTIAN COURIER

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## Conference critiques 'evangelicals engaging culture'

**Mars Hill Tapes host Myers says we've become cultural 'orphans and widows'**

**Marian Van Til**

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — If the North American evangelical Christian tradition once either ignored or actively insulated itself from secular culture, that is certainly no longer true on the part of thinking evangelicals. As an example, a July 5-7 conference in Annapolis, Maryland, outside of Washington, D.C., acted as a self-examination of "Evangelicals Engaging Culture."

### Notable speakers

The conference brought together such high profile evangelicals as David Wells (Andrew Mutch Distinguished Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Mass.), Ken Myers (host and producer of the *Mars Hill Tapes*, and contributing editor to *Christianity Today*), Phillip Johnson (law professor at the University of California at Berkeley and author of the much-talked about book *Darwin on Trial*), and Marvin Olasky (history professor at the University of Texas and editor of the conserva-

tive *Christian World* magazine).

The Jonathan Edwards Institute (JEI) of Princeton, N.J., sponsored the conference. The institute's executive director, Pedro Govantes, said in a welcome to conferees, "The Jonathan Edwards Institute is founded upon a simple principle: how we think determines how we act. At JEI we encourage and foster the building of a Christian mind that is grounded in the Scriptures and is consequently captivated by the beauty and majesty of the Lord."

Govantes continued by asserting that that Christian mind "should be so moved by the Truth that it is daily about the business of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with neighbors, friends and co-workers." That Christian mind should also understand that "true transformation of our individual lives and of our culture can only occur as Truth is proclaimed and the Holy Spirit quickens hearts and minds." That's why JEI would sponsor such a conference, and why the other part of the conference's title was "A Passion for Truth."

Those conferees who were looking for a lot of detailed, practical ways in which they as individuals can "engage (secular) culture," were probably disappointed — and some expressed that out loud. What the four plenary speakers did instead was to provide biblical analysis of the current secular culture — a — and evangelicals' place in relation to that culture. And most conferees must have realized the importance of such analysis. (While the conference assumed an American audience, the critique it offered was not specifically national, being more a kind of probing and testing of the spirits of our age.)

### Redefining human nature

Ken Myers began by addressing "Modern Culture and the Abolition of Man."



Ken Myers

He set the stage by taking note of James 1:27, which refers to "religion that God accepts" as looking after "orphans

and widows in distress" and keeping from being "polluted by the world." Thus, "in any situation where God's natural order is interrupted, we are called to give aid," said Myers. It turns out, we may need that aid ourselves. Myers outlined how the dehumanization of postmodern society has made Christians "orphans and widows" within it.

He referred to the C.S. Lewis work which forms part of his speech title: *The Abolition of Man*. Lewis saw, even in 1947 when he wrote the book, that a view of humankind was increasingly being embraced which makes "the definition of human beings so subjective as to be meaningless"; that human nature "can be anything we want it/us to be" — thus effectively

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## Canadians show muted enthusiasm for unions: survey

**Many Christians support idea, not reality, of Christian unions**

**Alan Doerksen**

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. — Although many Canadians support unions, a significant number have serious concerns about unions, according to a recent survey by the Work Research Foundation (WRF). And although many Reformed Christians support the idea of a Christian labor association (such as the Christian Labour Association of Canada — CLAC), many of them think differently when a union is being organized in their "backyard."

Last spring, WRF's project director, Ray Pennings, commissioned a national survey to examine Canadian attitudes toward unions. Dr. Reginald Bibby, of the University of Lethbridge, conducted the survey with help from the Gallup organization.

Some of the key findings:

- 58 per cent of those surveyed approve of unions, and 38 per cent disapproved;
- 75 per cent are opposed to union involvement in politics;
- 64 per cent do not believe confrontation is still necessary.

The top three reasons given for wanting to join a union were:

- 1) helping to improve pay and working conditions;
- 2) providing support for a problem at work;
- 3) increasing training opportunities.

### Associated with negative practices

In a recent WRF newsletter, Bibby commented, "The finding that only about 60 per cent of the population approve of unions sug-



Ted Harris, Principal of Beacon Christian High School in St. Catharines, Ont., whose teachers are now unionized.

gests that if unions have something to bring to Canadians they need to do a much better job of conveying what that is.... Some four in 10

See UNIONS page 2...



Paradigm Shift, an etching by George Langbroek.

**Christians engaging the culture**

**Being salt & light in the arts, labor — and everywhere**  
pp. 1-2, 5, 6, 12-15



## News

# Christians should combat dehumanization, says Myers

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abolishing any traditional, much less biblical, view of we human beings as having innate worth or living lives of any ultimate meaning.

The irony is that "humanism without God is inhuman humanism," and thus not humane at all, Myers pointed out. The modern "dehumanization" of society that we feel is a direct result of this "abolition of man" and of assuming that we can make our own, "flexible" definition of what it means to be human.

Evangelicals have tended not to confront the world on this point. "[We] evangelicals have not given enough attention to our humanity related to Christ's humanity," Myers said, referring to the book by Nigel Cameron with the presumably tongue-in-cheek title *Are Christians Human?* That's

"mainly because [theological] liberals never denied Christ's humanity, and the evangelical agenda has largely been patterned on defending truths others deny."

But not being comfortable with Christ's humanity has led evangelical Christians to a devaluing of their own humanity (as well as Christ's). Thus makes it difficult to critique a secular culture which has become dehumanized.

## Redefining nature too

Modern human beings want no limitations, moral or physical, Myers continued, but "God created us to be limited beings." Modernity's redefining of humanity, asserting control over ourselves, apart from God, has also meant a redefining of nature according to our desires. We think that nothing, including time, should limit us, making time "an enemy rather than

a matrix in which we created to live."

Modern culture denies that "there is a 'givenness' to creation," Myers said. "Culture and nature are in harmony in the classical and Christian view, but in modernity the two are opposed." Myers noted that though the rest of creation suffers along with us because of the Fall, the post-Fall creation still has meaning and order, including a moral order.

One way for Christians to combat dehumanization and the devaluing of creation is to take our physicality more seriously, including the meaning of our bodies, Myers asserted. More than once he warned his evangelical audience against a kind of modern gnosticism (gnosticism was an early Christian heresy which denied the reality of the body, and of Christ's physical body). "We seem

to have a suspicion that it wasn't such a good idea that God created us with bodies," he said.

## Combating 'fromlessness'

Two ways in which modern culture dehumanizes us and disembodies us is in the way it regards food and eating, and in the way it denies the importance of "place."

We've turned food into mere fuel, to be taken at any time, in any place, and have generally stripped it of meaning beyond that, and we less and less often take it in community. We've so far removed it from creation (and thus as a gift from God) that it is in many cases unrecognizable as natural substances.

Regarding the downplaying of "place," Myers quoted Florence King who says we suffer from "fromlessness." We move often, we change churches, we don't

engage in community. Modern humanity is experiencing a kind of "non-affiliation" which is new in human history, reinforced by technology that destroys a sense of place. But God created us as embodied social beings, and place matters. In denying that, modern society has made us "widows and orphans."

We must combat that by maintaining a biblical sense of community. And we must recognize that "there is no such thing as 'virtual community,'" Myers asserted. True human community requires communion with *whole persons*, not just minds. There may be congeniality, collegiality in virtual communication, but not *community*. "Christians, in some ways," he concluded, "ought to be the least mobile of people."

# Unions need to address workplace issues, avoid politics, violence

... continued from page 1

people need to be convinced that unions are worthwhile — including many who have been members and have come away unimpressed."

Ray Pennings says he was not really surprised by the survey's results. "What it shows very clearly is that tangible social benefits are what unions need to sell themselves on." The lack of higher support for unions in the survey shows that "sometimes people associate unions with negative practices," he says. This is also a result of the "generally negative media image" of unions.

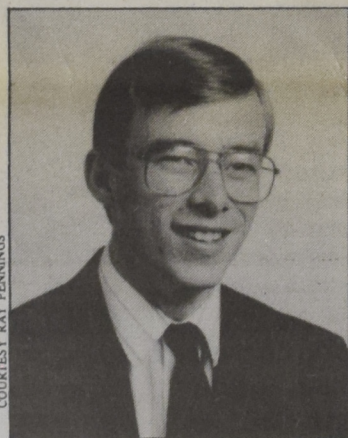
But Pennings adds, "This poll clearly shows unions have a place and they need to be protected."

## CLAC tripled in size

The number of people who opposed union involvement in politics shows that "unions need to be focusing on workplace issues as opposed to the political stuff," says Pennings. CLAC, which Pennings is also connected with, focuses on workplace issues and not politics, he asserts. Because of this, he believes, CLAC has tripled in size during the 1990s, while other union organizations have declined.

CLAC has widespread support within the Christian Reformed community, says Pennings. "People by and large think we do good work. Philosophically, the idea of a Christian union resonates well... But when it comes close to home, they may not agree with it."

CLAC has organized unions at many Christian workplaces,



Ray Pennings

including several schools, nursing homes, and agencies helping the disabled, says Pennings. "Overall we have established good working relationships," he observes. "The union truly represents its members and does not bring in another agenda."

"CLAC has always held that a strike is a failure of the system," Pennings contends. After 10,000 collective agreements by CLAC, there have been only three related work stoppages, he says. And although strikes often get much play in the media, Pennings asserts that among unions in general, "97 per cent of union settlements are made without work stoppages."

## Christian community 'anti-union'

Hank Beekhuis, a CLAC representative based in St. Catharines,

Ont., sees the 58 per cent support level for unions as "not all that low." But he thinks unions have a negative image for some people because "there's a lot of people who have difficulty with unions from time to time."

Beekhuis believes some large unions are playing too big a role in politics. "The survey shows union members are not interested [in that]," he asserts. For instance, he says, "The CAW [Canadian Auto Workers], which supports the NDP, probably couldn't get two-thirds of its members to vote for the NDP. The average worker is pretty conservative." Beekhuis points to the poor showing of the NDP in the recent Ontario election as proof of this.

Beekhuis believes the Canadian Christian community, as a whole, is "pretty anti-union in outlook." One reason he cites is "there's a tremendous amount of fear associated with organizing [a union]" — fear of loss of control to the union.

## 'Not in my backyard'

CLAC has gained recognition and support within the CRC, as well as with Mennonites and people connected with the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC), says Beekhuis. But many people support CLAC only in principle and have a "not-in-my-backyard" attitude toward CLAC's work, he asserts.

About four years ago, Beekhuis and other CLAC members helped to unionize teachers at two Christian schools in St. Catharines:

Calvin Memorial Christian School and Beacon Christian High School. This process "was very difficult because of the fear around the process of unionization," observes Beekhuis. "We were trying to be extremely careful." But Beekhuis believes, in that situation, "we've done a good thing.... In the long term, it could turn out to be beneficial."

Beekhuis looks at the recent decision by Christian schools in Edmonton to join the public school system as "mindboggling." He is surprised that the schools agreed to join the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) but rejected CLAC. "Economics tends to set the agenda," he concludes.

Ted Harris is principal of Beacon Christian High School, whose teachers were recently unionized. He admits that the process of forming a union "wasn't smooth. Given the secret and almost clandestine process of unionization, that process brings pain."

The process of unionization at the two schools "took a couple of years," he explains. "I don't look at those as good times." But, he notes, "the product is an excellent agreement. The result makes it worth it."

Like Beekhuis and Pennings, Harris believes many Reformed Christians support CLAC "as a concept.... It's part of the Reformed way of thinking." But some people are uncomfortable if CLAC is working close to them.

Andrew Wunderink, a teacher at Beacon, agrees with this. But he

sees CLAC as a good alternative to secular unions. He says the unionization process at his school "was tough to get going." But, "after a rocky start, it seems to be going okay."

## Moving toward 'self-destruct'

Commenting on lukewarm support for unions indicated in the WRF survey, Wunderink says, "I don't think the result is surprising. The union movement in many ways has been self-destructing." He points to strikes as an example of this, especially: "The manner with which strikes are carried out. Too often violence is involved." The media tends to focus on such violence, Wunderink adds.

Regarding union involvement in politics, Wunderink asserts, "Anytime a union becomes too associated with one party, they're setting themselves up for a fall." He cites former Ontario premier Bob Rae, of the NDP, wanting to help out unions but being limited by financial constraints.

To improve their public image, unions should be "meeting reasonable objectives," suggests Wunderink. "The day of the union having super-control over its members is gone. The day of the union using violence as a tool is gone." Unions should not be too focussed on money issues, but should give more consideration to "the dignity of workers," he contends.



## News/Politics

# Witvoet farewell a bittersweet occasion

## Unidentified CC Staff Members

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. — What might induce upwards of 125 heat-drenched Reformed Ontarians to crowd into a local un-air-conditioned church on a sizzling Saturday night for an event which had been clearly billed as "hot"? It was the promised ceremonial roasting of *Christian Courier's* newly retired editor.

On the evening of July 17, the

board of Reformed Faith Witness and the staff of *Christian Courier* hosted a fond lampoon of the life and work of Mr. Bert Witvoet — former teacher, principal, mail carrier, editor, and all-around guy. The event was held at Jubilee Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in St. Catharines, with managing editor Marian Van Til acting as MC.

Board representative Sylvan

Gerritsma opened the formal portion of the evening with words of gratitude for Bert's leadership and vision during his 17 years at *Christian Courier*. It appeared that the board had waived the "roast Witvoet" requirement in this case, since Gerritsma's remarks were both laudatory and appreciative. Said one fiery guest, who asked not to be identified, "At least Gerritsma's personal remarks

were warm, very warm, which was entirely consistent with the spirit of a roast." The guest had come with finely carved roasting sticks and was prepared for high heat, he/she said.

## Offspring steal the show

A little closer to roast temperature were the spoofs presented by the staff, but Witvoet could have expected this. After all, if he who lives by the sword should die by the sword, then he who lives by the well-honed edge of articulate wordcraft should also die by it. That their former editor actually managed to survive the evening was not the fault of the staff, since their well-laid plans were all in order. "We did our best to even the score," claimed a CC staff member who asked not to be identified.

"This was our last chance, but I don't think we came close!"

Witvoet was presented with a gen-u-ine "poetic license," as well as a couple of more useful tokens of appreciation: a gift certificate for the huge Internet "bookstore" amazon.com, and a set of the complete issues of *National Geographic* on 25 (computer) CDs stored in a handsome felt-lined wooden box.

The show was actually stolen by Bert's five offspring (Ed, Marguerite, Maynard, Steve and John) who — taking the microphone one after the other — delighted and entertained the audience with music, remembrances and wit, painting a compassionate, humorous, touching tableau of Bert's life and work.

Later in the evening, Bert's wife, asking not to be identified, claimed she was very proud of her family. (She even secretly admitted that the talented group of young people was more like her than like Bert, but asked us not to quote her on that.)

During one of the serious moments of the evening Witvoet publicly accepted a plaque proclaiming him an "honorary life mem-

ber" in the Canadian Church Press, presented by CCP vice-president Rose Anne Hart. *Christian Courier* is one of 76 Christian publications in Canada and seven associate members (individuals) who make up this professional organization. Bert joins 12 previous recipients of this award, which is given to individuals who have made noteworthy contributions to CCP and to the particular publica-

## Not exactly polar opposites

In 1953, northern Michigan's late public philosopher Russell Kirk wrote *The Conservative Mind*, which is often credited with launching the post-World War II conservative movement in the United States. A few years later William F. Buckley founded *The National Review*, the U.S.'s foremost conservative journal.

Since then, American conservatives have been attempting to capture cultural and political power away from their presumed foes, the liberals. Indeed they thought they had won the day in 1980 when Ronald Reagan was elected president, the Republicans took control of the Senate for the first time in a generation, and a *de facto* conservative majority took the House of Representatives. They thought they had won another decisive victory in 1994 when Republicans swept both chambers of Congress.

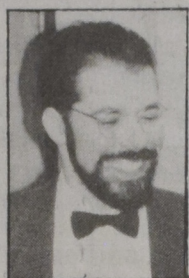
Yet five years later conservative organizer and fundraiser Paul Weyrich has admitted defeat and counselled friends and supporters to withdraw from the larger culture and to form alternative, parallel institutions. What went wrong?

## Not a clear alternative

It is not as though conservatives have misunderstood the direction of the larger culture. For example, one time Supreme Court nominee Robert Bork, in his *Slouching Towards Gomorrah*, puts his finger on several disturbing social trends, including increasing divorce rates, inner city crime, decreasing respect for authority, the relaxation of educational standards and the debasement of popular culture.

Yet if conservatives have been unable to score a final victory it is because their professed conservatism is not as opposed to liberalism as they think it is, and thus does not constitute a clear alternative capable of commanding sufficiently enduring political support.

Consider former President Ronald Reagan and his followers. According to Christopher Lasch, Reagan's so-called "traditional values," insofar as they celebrated American-style rugged individualism, had little to do with tradition. Rather, they embodied the "code of the cowboy, the man in flight from his ancestors, from his immediate family, and from everything that tied him down and limited his freedom of movement."



David T. Koyzis

Similarly, historian Eugene Genovese argues that Reagan was "a right-wing liberal" whose "optimistic view of human nature should warm the heart of liberal theologians" and whose "celebration of limitless material progress reaches poetic heights." Canadian philosopher George Grant argues that American conservatives are little more than "old-fashioned liberals."

In other words, what is often portrayed as a life and death struggle between two opposing worldviews is nothing of the sort. If conservatives have been so notoriously unsuccessful in the U.S. it is because there is not enough principial content in the conservative vision. Conservatives and liberals are simply vying for custody of the larger liberal legacy.

## Naive assumptions

Catholic theologian David L. Schindler understands better than most observers the true character of this larger liberalism. While most American conservatives embrace the moderate liberal principles of the founding fathers, he argues that these already contain the seeds of a more radical liberalism hostile to Christianity's public witness. Thus, if Bork dislikes the fruits of contemporary liberalism, he is naïve to embrace a more classical liberalism and expect that its assumptions will not lead to a similar end.

The lessons of all this for Canadians are twofold. First, should a United Alternative fail to get off the ground, it will likely be due to the inherent tensions between conservative liberals, with their emphasis on markets and personal freedom, and Tory conservatives, with their stress on social stability and the common good. But if it does succeed, it may not turn out to be much of an alternative after all, even if it does defeat the Liberals at the polls.

*David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ontario. When asked about his own political convictions, he sometimes calls himself a fanatical moderate.*



Canadian Church Press vice-president Rose Anne Hart presents Bert Witvoet with a CCP honorary life membership.

tion the recipient represents.

## Quick recovery expected

The evening ended on a sweet note: a large "Farewell and Blessings" cake and nice hot coffee. According to latest reports, Witvoet is still recovering on his chesterfield at home but should be up and about soon so that he can take up his new, part-time work as managing editor of the quarterly *Christian Educators Journal*.

The journal is based in Grand Rapids, Mich., but due to the miracle of modern technology, Witvoet will be able to supervise production of the journal's four issues a year from his home in St. Catharines. "Weekly publication is excessive," Witvoet was overheard to say. "Even biweekly is a headache. I think four times per year is the perfect frequency for me."

To manage the stress, he'll have the help of local graphic artist Doug Roorda and copy editor Nelly Westerhoff, both of whom are CC editorial advisory committee members.



## Editorial

# Bringing art home to the church

Raymond Louter

Recently, a few of my theatre history students challenged their classmates on a crucial cultural question. After their research they came to the conclusion that traditional native cultures had no theatre – at least not theatre as we usually understand it. Instead, what many native tribes practised was a theatrical and ritualized approach to life that was rich and satisfying on many levels. Their *lives* included theatre.

The stories, music, drama and ritual of numerous native groups are difficult to study because of the way in which these forms are integrated into their communal life. The language we now use to describe theatre is inadequate because religion, art and social interaction were indivisible, and we like categories. This has made me reflect on how we integrate – and disintegrate – life and art as Christians today.

A few months ago, thanks to a research grant, I traveled to the United Kingdom to attend a conference and to see what I knew to be significant theatre sites. One morning I toured the magnificent Salisbury Cathedral – an edifice which is not just a monument to the faith of the past, but also part of a living Christian community today.

Later that same day I bought a bus ticket to head north from Salisbury, past Stonehenge, to a small village called Avebury. The village is surrounded by an ancient megalithic monument now called the Avebury

Circle. Older than the pyramids and more grand than Stonehenge, the site is about 2,000 feet across. At one time, the space that the village now occupies was completely encircled by a moat (30 feet deep in places) and a circle of large vertical stones, many of which are 12-15 feet high, weighing several tons each.

Clearly, the circle had once been a gathering place of some kind. Some speculate that it was a burial site or a place of primitive ritual. But its purpose remains a mystery. As I walked through the encircling moat considering the enormous effort such a place would have taken to build by hand, so long ago, a fellow tourist remarked to me: "It must have been religious."

"Pardon?" I said, startled.

"All of this..." she gestured to the stones, "they did this for religious reasons."

I agreed. And for reasons which still disturb me now, standing there I felt humbled, overwhelmed. I was reminded that *place* is very important to a religious community; and so is *beauty*.

## Merging heaven and earth

The cathedral's vaulted ceilings and stained glass direct the eyes heavenward, and make one feel a sense of the grandeur of God. The circle's rough grey stones and space direct the eyes to the horizon and to earth. I suddenly thought about the Christian Reformed churches I've worshiped in at home, and was sad.

I have never been overwhelmed that way in any Christian Reformed church building. Some might argue that churches today (the buildings too) rightly emphasize a personal God more than churches did in the past. And I'd have to agree. But still, I believe that we have lost some of the biblical emphasis that God is a God of mystery and great power. So how can we modern North Americans better worship and live in the full knowledge of God? Do we actually want to?

When I look at worship in the CRC I see a discomfort with symbolic expressions of faith. Artistic and symbolic things are considered "nice" but not generally necessary. We stare at a summer sky full of stars and sense that God cannot be placed in a theological box, but we cannot find the way to bring that sense of God into worship because our *words* fail us. Who can explain the Spirit of God? Can words alone adequately capture the joy of conversion in Christ? How might artists become a more important part of the picture?

## Alienated from artistic play

Deeply held faith has spurred Reformed Christians to create numerous educational and social organizations; but we as a Christian community can't yet celebrate our collective success in supporting *artistic* ways of engaging culture. For evidence I point to worship as it is currently practised in the CRC and many Protestant churches. Why look there? one might ask.

Corporate worship is the primary religious act. So how we worship should say something about how we look, literally and symbolically, at the world around us. But if Sunday worship is our primary act of devotion, we make little of it in a symbolic and artistic sense. *Place* and *beauty* seem unimportant.

The problem is that we have separated religious faith, artistic activity and worship. This is the reason for an awkward sense of our place in culture. It comes from having alienated ourselves from artistic play, and subsequently from symbolic worship.

The first way to address our complex and

ever-changing culture is to once again open ourselves to the influence of arts – which evoke mystery – in worship. Since religion and art have so often been one throughout history, and in so many cultures, we ought to consider whether we have created a dualism in separating them. Perhaps the way to change the world is to first eliminate that dualism in our worship.

A personal confession: "Reformedness" has often meant cerebral rather than spiritual/emotional/intuitive activity to me. It goes back to my Sunday school and catechism experiences. When I "did profession of faith" (strange term) some years ago I was given a book on Reformed doctrine. I was advised to "take it seriously!" I can't imagine a less exciting way to celebrate a spiritual coming-of-age. The book was fine, and the council meant well. But where was the *celebration*? What ritual do we have to proclaim that some fool has opened his life to Jesus?

Protestant *ritual*? I know that it flies in the face of history and tradition for many of us (not for the small minority of Anglicans and Catholics in CC's readership, of course). So be it. I believe that the absence of beauty and ritual in many Protestant churches has come about over time because of our collective suspicion of mystery: we've been leery of that which we cannot see, understand and explain in a rational way.

To escape the overly cerebral aspects of theology, many Protestant congregations have now traded religious "knowledge" for religious "experience." I believe that the enormous changes in worship many Reformed churches have undergone in the last 15 years have happened with little reflection on the artfulness of liturgy and worship as a whole.

## No sanctuary

In the rush to make worship "relevant" and contemporary we have missed an opportunity to reconnect our worship to Christian worship *tradition* in the best sense. There are many examples of Christian communities abandoning the notion of a traditional church building in favor of a "multipurpose space" that, supposedly, would work as well for worship as it would for sports. Within my lifetime I have seen the complete loss of the notion of a worship space as a "sanctuary."

The stone circle at Avebury and the cathedral at Salisbury showed me that worship space is crucially important. This sketch is not just mistaken nostalgia for the church of the past. It is Biblical "nostalgia" for something real, and lasting, and something that is currently lacking for most Protestants.

We need the arts because artists are members of the Body of Christ, and the Body needs wholeness. We need the arts to re-root worship in the stuff of real life. We need to face God and tremble. We need to laugh and cry. We need impassioned readings of the Psalms. We need robust encounters with the Song of Songs. We need to embrace the wholeness of Scripture – to allow ourselves to be changed by it. We need the arts to let us experience all this anew in symbolic richness.

Then we can look outward and understand the noise, the cries and the laughter of the world beyond the *sanctuary* walls. Then our music, visual art, drama, film and dance will give fuller expression to pain and brokenness, as well as to the healing and the joy, of Christian life.

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## Christian Courier

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- express opinions infused by Scripture and rooted in a Reformed perspective;
- provide contact for the Christian community.

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## Sports/Letters

## After the Buzzer



Tim Antonides

## You make the call

People in Buffalo are just starting to recover and move on with their lives. We're not talking about a devastating tornado or a school yard rampage (or, were it winter, another giant snowstorm), but something much more ominous and profound: his skate was in the crease.

That's right, it was. Brett Hull scored the goal that won the Stanley Cup for the Dallas Stars. Upon review of the videotape, however, we could see that his skate was inside the goal crease which should have erased the goal. The referees missed it.

The other day, a home plate umpire had to leave a baseball game in New York because of heat exhaustion. After the game, the Yankees' catcher lambasted him to reporters because he felt that the umpire's heat exhaustion had caused some poor strike calls at the plate. This was mildly reminiscent of the day in 1996 when the already controversial owner of the Cincinnati Reds said she felt "cheated" after the opening game of the season was cancelled. Why? The umpire dropped dead from a massive heart attack.

Four months ago, Tim Antonides was reffing a Grade Eight basketball game in P.E. class. Off to the side, he saw a player knock over another player. He blew the whistle, just as a player shot a basket. He declared the play dead and disallowed the basket. There was a great uproar in the land. The people had been wronged. Once again, the ref had blown a call and ruined the game.

## As old as Adam

It is convenient to blame officials for failure. It's fun to hear a hockey arena resonate with boos after a missed penalty. I can still remember the thrill of watching John

McEnroe blast an umpire for failing to make a correct call on a 120 mph tennis serve. Who doesn't enjoy seeing a baseball manager and an umpire scream at each other, followed by the obligatory ejection of the manager from the game? It adds excitement.

But the way many people treat authorities in sports is infuriating. The manner in which Grade 3 kids complain about "unfair" teams is not much different from the way that hockey coaches blubber and

rage to the ref through a thick cloud of profanity. From early on, people have developed an insidious ability to blame and condemn officials in sports. It seems as natural as dribbling a ball or lacing up skates.

It seems to me that there are two main reasons for this. First of all, we have seen an increasing disintegration of personal responsibility. It started with Adam blaming Eve in the Garden and has rumbled through human history, reaching mammoth proportions in our age.

I see this constantly in my job as a teacher. Respect for property, fellow human beings and authority is crumbling. With Jesus Christ put on the back burner, there's not much reason to be accountable. Placing blame on others for our inadequacy is wonderfully liberating and surprisingly easy.

I also think that because we live in a culture that worships personal freedom and autonomy, there is a deep-seated distaste, even hatred, of being controlled by others. A sports official is supposed to establish and maintain control. Our rebellious, independent nature can't handle that. The fact that every kind of human authority will always make mistakes from time to time does not help. It only helps some people rationalize their attitude towards officials.

It's time for sports fans who do such things to stop sobbing about the officiating and realize that no matter how skilled someone is, he or she will make mistakes. Let's get over it and maintain a little respect, even if someone's skate is in someone else's crease.

Tim Antonides teaches and coaches at Surrey Christian School, Surrey, B.C.

## Calls attention to book and website re: 12-step recovery

I want to call your attention to a unique book written by ordained minister Dr. Cal Chambers. It's called *Two Tracks. One Goal*. He shares his own insights on how the Christian faith has inspired the 12 steps of recovery in A.A. [Alcoholics Anonymous] and how we as Christians can use the 12-step program to help alcoholics discover the God who has always loved them and who can change them by his great power.

I think this is a life-saving book, well worth the \$17.95 (\$12.95 US) cost. At the website you can read the first part of chapter one, the contents, the preface and the forward. You can "meet the author" and get involved in a discussion group. The website also includes some excellent endorsements of the book.

Derek Duley  
Vancouver

## Don't gang up on the alcoholic

I read the article on intervention [therapy for alcoholics] in the July 12 issue of *Christian Courier*. I think [such an] intervention team operates just like a cult. They try to catch a person when he is most vulnerable and try to gang up on him just like bullies. It is not fair to spring a surprise on him, even on an alcoholic.

Even an alcoholic deserves respect and making an appointment with him. Even a person who is not an alcoholic would be hard pressed not to give in to an intervention

team like that.

You are interfering with a person's freedom, and even an alcoholic is entitled to his freedom.

Besides, if you read the Bible you do not find anywhere that Jesus gangs up on sinners, but, for example, says to the woman caught in adultery, "Go, and sin no more." I think Jesus' way is the right way.

Johannes Hoftzyer  
Brighton, Ontario

Send your questions  
to Peter and Marja.  
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assured.

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## News

# 'New spirituality' is culture's new gospel: prominent theologian

Marian Van Til

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — At the Annapolis, Maryland, conference on "Evangelicals Engaging Culture" Ken Myers opened the gathering by speaking about what C.S. Lewis presciently called "the abolition of man" (see front page story). Theologian/writer Dr. David Wells ended the conference by presenting a dire analysis regarding "Culture and the Abolition of the Church."

He joked that he was glad he was last on the agenda, as what he had to say might be considered a controversial, bitter pill, and he could duck out to the airport before being accosted by anyone about his analysis.

On the one hand, he began, that title (he didn't choose it) is misleading because, of course, Christ has said he will uphold his church "through the ages from the beginning of the world," preserved, as the Anglican liturgy puts it, "from the world, the flesh and the devil."

"But from where you and I sit, it sometimes looks like it's going to be a very close call, does it not?" Wells asked rhetorically.

## An unlikely challenge

Wells asserted that the greatest challenge to the church is coming from an unlikely corner: from the so-called new spirituality afoot in our culture, which he called "a strange, internal transformation of the postmodern world in which we live."

"It is an alternative gospel of regeneration which you can have on strictly secular terms," he said. "You can have it without having to believe in the God of the Bible. Were this [pseudo-gospel] to be successful it would be the downfall of the church."

Back in the '70s many Christians were becoming "perturbed by secular humanism" and by the early '80s it "seemed like a tidal wave bearing down upon us," he

noted. The thesis was that as society became engulfed by a "modernizing" spirit, a cultural environment would develop in which "God [would] become a non-player," and the church would disappear.

But, contrary to many evangelicals' expectations, the 1990s brought this new tidal wave of spiritualities. The effects are obvious everywhere: "In advertising, religion is now rivaling sex as a way to get things sold," Wells noted. He mentioned several ad examples with overt religious overtones: Volvo will "save the earth"; Mitsubishi Montero Sport has come "to comfort the earth"; Lexus 300 is the only thing that "escapes the ravages of time."

Wells held up the public adoration of the late Princess Diana as another example (Wells is a native of Britain), saying, "All this religious devotion from a very secular people focused on a very secular princess who twice tried to commit suicide."

## A convenient religion

Wells's main premise was the disturbing contention that "the secular world is beginning to assume a religious role, and offers most of what Christianity does, but without the 'inconvenience' of having to believe in the God of the Bible."

He first presented a detailed description of this new "chief competitor to the gospel," which, he noted, "would win and all would be lost [quite literally] if not for the grace and power of God."

This new "gospel" (ultimately, no "good news" to its adherents) is "a combination of assumptions about and beliefs in all the ways we think we can produce self-transformation; the ways we can find, manufacture, accomplish some liberation from the plagues that fester in our souls."

There are many illustrations of it at work, said Wells — "some are trivial, relatively unimportant, transient effects; others are much deeper."

As a transient example he began with hair, and referred to a book by Grant McCracken called *Big Hair: A Journey into the Transformation of the Self*. Wells, paraphrasing McCracken, contended that "'style' can be a surface that people use to transform or even hide themselves," which may involve borrowing "from across an entire social landscape."

Hundreds of shampoos, conditioners, coloring agents, perms, straighteners, mouses, gels beg to be taken off store or salon shelves,

and salons themselves act as oases — as *treatment* — for their busy, harried clients. So perhaps modern society's obsession with hair is not quite so trivial as it may seem.

## 'Who are the healers?'

This leads, said Wells, "into a question that I think is probably the most penetrating question you can ask in any culture, and certainly in this one: 'Who are the healers?' If you know that, then you know what the disease is. You will find yourself in the inner sanctum of that culture."

Our culture has embraced two main "healers": Psychotherapy and advertising.

Psychotherapy doesn't just "live in the mind of the professional," Wells asserted. "In this torrent of secular spirituality we are our own clients and our own therapists. We'll use any techniques which promise the cure of the self."

In the 1960s, the focus was "encounter groups"; in the '70s, self-help books; in the '80s and '90s, recovery groups — to the point that "there is not a human malady for which there is not a recovery group." Along those lines, the Baby Boomers ("rootless, disconnected Boomers") are "drawn together like ad hoc committees; we don't have communities today," he asserted. We have short-term gatherings that act as "surrogate, secularized churches."

## 'Liberation psychology'

Wells noted that a number of the early psychotherapy leaders were raised in mainline Protestantism (e.g., Carl Rogers). They found Freud's pessimism "revolting," and developed instead "a kind of 'liberation psychology'" — not a particular school of psychology, but assumptions which have seeped into our culture.

Wells said those assumptions are:

1. We can find the self (this kind of language would have been "incomprehensible prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century");

2. The self is essentially benign;

3. The self, like the body, has its own healing mechanisms and we simply have to tap into them;

4. Others are a threat to the reality of the self.

"This is a radical ideology," Wells contended, which not only has grave implications for the church, but which actually "threatens our democracy — any psychology which sanctifies the rights of the self is bound to cause endless problems: one person's good is another person's evil." And indeed, we're seeing the bitter fruits of that.

## 'To have not is to be damned'

The other late 20<sup>th</sup> century "healer" is advertising, Wells maintains. Modern advertising, in its disseminating information about products and why we should buy them, tries to convince us that "having an intensely satisfying private experience [with a particular product] is what the world's about; that the pursuit of the good life is really the pursuit of the good things in life."

Advertising "taps into our inadequacy. It says: 'To have is to be, to have not is to be damned.' That is the gospel of our affluent age."

In the methods of "preaching" that "gospel" we see "the aping of the revivalistic practice of 'testimonies,'" observed Wells. "Two older couples converse. After taking Sustacal, the one couple tells the other, life is filled with happy, bright prospects."

"This 'gospel' has no interest in our cities, minorities, immigrants, loss." The important things in the world are "bad breath, indigestion, gas, constipation. Advertisers have become the priesthood of our prosperity, as devoted to their products as a pastor should be to the gospel."

## Beings of eternity

The key to understanding this alternative gospel can be found in Romans 1, said Wells, in the fact that God created us beings who must respond to him, either embracing him or rejecting him.

"As fallen and unredeemed people we are still believers and still worshippers. Our capacity and need to believe is unchanged. What has changed is the object of our belief: we commit ourselves to the lie. We are beings of eternity; it is our glory and our downfall. And

it explains this strangely religious aspect to our secularized culture. The fallen self, once turned to the creature, now turns in on itself."

We moderns are, as someone has said, "nuclear giants and moral midgets." "We are toying with the secrets of life and death and we don't see we are playing on the very edge of a precipice."

## How to respond?

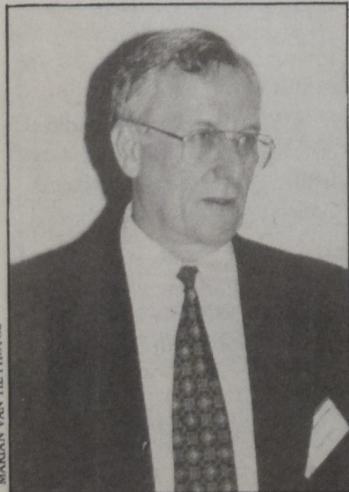
Wells made two final points about postmodern culture: First, "We are making assumptions in a way that few in the whole [history of] the human race would understand."

There were once people who trembled before God, who feared the Judgment, who understood what a bad conscience is. (Luther, for example, nearly fainted at the thought of Christ being present in the Eucharist.) They inhabited a moral world; we inhabit a therapeutic world. They experienced the grace of God. We seek right technique, the right product. We knew only God can rejuvenate. We think we can rejuvenate ourselves."

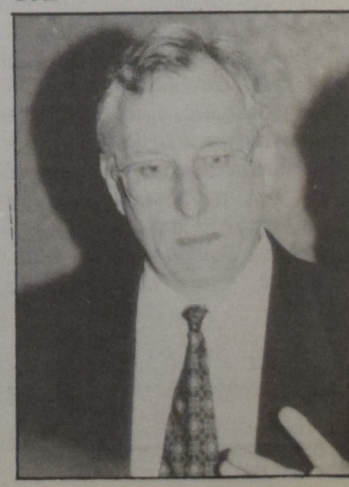
Second, "We have lost our understanding of sin." A recent survey which probed Americans' beliefs found that two-thirds do not believe that sin exists, and only 17 per cent define sin in relation to God.

Wells ended with a final sobering thought, but one underlain by God's continued faithfulness. "We have not lost our need for redemption," Wells observed, "and God still sustains the moral structures of this universe."

Not acknowledging that this new spirituality is an idol, "we're caught in the spider web of reality" — impinged upon by the structures God created in his universe. "The more we try to escape, the more finely the threads wrap themselves around us." Our escape lies in a return to acknowledging that God is God.



MARIAN VAN TIL PHOTOS





## Arts/Media

# Film accused of pornography acutely critiques sex-obsessed culture, opts for fidelity

Marian Van Til

## Eyes Wide Shut

**Starring Tom Cruise, Nicole Kidman, Sydney Pollack. Directed by Stanley Kubrick.**

*Eyes Wide Shut* is a controversial film. And it was long before its July 16 North American release. The reason? There are several: one has to do with the film's director, the other with the sort of sexual content it is reputed to contain.

We'll get to the content and its significance in a moment. But first, the director.

Director Stanley Kubrick, at age 70, died of heart failure four days after finishing this film. Kubrick was one of the truly brilliant directors of the last four decades. He was a close-to-the-vest type whose sense of privacy extended to keeping information about his films (particularly this one) under wraps for months during the grueling shooting schedules he would require (which helped fuel the wild rumors about the content of this film).

He was an artist and a perfectionist, exacting to the point of insisting on dozens and dozens of takes of the same scene, and earning him the reputation among actors (but usually not the best actors) as being difficult to work with. He would take more time to make one film than many directors would take to make two, or even more.

Kubrick's films have been mostly discomfiting, in one way or another. With unblinking eye they have offered critiques of disintegrating 20<sup>th</sup> century society. *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), for example, demonstrated with startling, violent clarity what amoral monster a society may spawn when it no longer respects or understands the implications of being human, or cherishes boundaries between people, or in society in general.

### A soul-destroying god

*Eyes Wide Shut* explores some of that same theme, in a very different way. It, too, is disturbing, but not for the reasons that one self-styled "Christian media expert" has said it is. That very conservative critic called this film "trash" and "pornography." I find that reaction from a fellow Christian highly unfortunate because I consider this to be an important

and carefully crafted film from an important and careful director.

Kubrick's film is disturbing because it takes an eyes-wide-open look at the manner in which our society has turned sex into a god, and that god into a religion. The film recognizes that god not just as an impotent idol (I use the word with intent) but as a soul-destroying one.

Kubrick's antidote is gratifying, and positively counter-cultural. The answer to all that nameless, faceless, passionless coupling that our society considers entertainment but which has wreaked so much emotional trauma, spiritual debility, physical disease and actual death, is this: fidelity; a loving, exclusive marriage relationship which its partners must work hard to nurture and maintain. (Kubrick himself had been married 41 years when he died; no coincidence, I think.)

### The perfect couple

Kubrick's plot centres on a New York City doctor and his wife, currently an unemployed art-gallery curator. Bill and Alice Harbord are played by real-life husband and wife Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman. In scene one we're introduced to the Harbords and their eight-year-old daughter one Christmas in Manhattan. They seem to be the Ozzie and Harriet of the '90s: a loving, good-looking, rich, practically perfect couple.

Bill and Alice are getting ready for a party. We see her from behind, unclothed, standing in their bathroom. She begins to dress, and he, already dressed, comes in and straightens his tie in front of the mirror. They seem to have a warm relationship and are totally comfortable in each other's presence: she sits down to use the toilet, meanwhile asking him if she looks alright. Without bothering to look at her, and still focusing on himself, he absently assures her she always looks beautiful. She asks another question of the same sort, and he again answers without actually looking at her.

In most other directors' movies this would be a throw-away scene. Not in Stanley Kubrick's (and we'll come back to it).

The Harbord's go to the party, hosted by an enigmatic man named Ziegler who is ridiculously wealthy. They are not sure why he invites them to such gatherings, and they don't know anyone there. In the course of the party, a much older, suave Hungarian gentleman

tries to seduce Alice — unsuccessfully, as she makes clear to him that she's married and that she loves her husband (which news he appears to think quaint, even humorous). Meanwhile, two bimbos try their luck with Bill, and are also unsuccessful.

Then Bill the physician is called upstairs to Ziegler's bedroom.

*"I would not think of quarreling with your interpretation nor offering any other, as I have found it always the best policy to allow the film to speak for itself."*

— Stanley Kubrick

where a drug-addicted beauty queen with whom Ziegler has just had sex lies, naked, in a stupor from an overdose. Ziegler is concerned only to the degree that she's cluttering up his apartment and wants to be rid of her. But Harford treats her compassionately and urges Ziegler to allow the woman to stay for an hour and then to have her brought home.

### Taking her for granted

Back at their own home the doctor and his wife trendily smoke pot, and under the influence of the weed, their emotions rise close to the surface. Bill asks about the Hungarian; Alice asks about the two women, and what he was doing all that time when he disappeared at the party. They discuss possible sexual attraction for other partners. Bill confidently says he has no fear that Alice would ever want anyone else. She, annoyed, says: "You're quite sure of yourself, aren't you?" He answers: "I'm sure of you."

She reacts immediately and angrily. We wonder why, sympathizing with what appears to be his legitimate trust in her, until we remember that beginning "throw-away" scene. Bill takes his wife, her ongoing presence and love for him, for granted. We conclude that she has clearly been feeling it, and his benign indifference has hurt her.

Still making assumptions, he compounds his all-knowing self-assurance by telling Alice how she should be feeling: that women don't react to men like men do to women.

That spurs Alice to want to jolt him into an awareness of her real-

ity: she tells him of a fantasy she had about a naval officer who was at the same vacation hotel where they stayed last summer; how one look from the man made her want to throw away all she had in exchange for a night with him.

Bill is stunned. He has been oblivious to any cracks in their relationship — he thought he had things down, but his eyes had been "wide shut."

### Sleepwalking through hell

Before they can decide whether to try to talk it out, or what to do next, Bill gets called away: a patient of his has died. Thus begins a bizarre, painful — and dangerous — night on the street.

Kubrick takes the Harford character through a series of tests. Bill is eaten up with jealousy, and his confidence in himself and his manhood have been shattered. How will he seek to restore them? Will he succumb to the unexpected advances of his dead patient's daughter? Bed that prostitute? Participate in a sinister orgy he suddenly uncovers via a former med-school classmate?

Bill spends the night stumbling — sleepwalking, as it were — as if an observer in hell, a hell which results when God-imaging beings have turned themselves into dead-eyed, dead-souled objects by offering their bodies to any and all takers.

In the already infamous orgy scene, two things stand out: Kubrick begins the orgy as a pagan religious ritual. Pagan rituals, of course, have often been associated with human sacrifice and/or aberrant sexual practices. But I think Kubrick's point is more simple and obvious, and more directly related to our society as a whole: sex has become both a god and that god's religion.

There is a great deal of female nudity in this scene: several dozen women wearing only tiny G-strings and high heels, all with exactly the same kind of perfectly proportioned, perfectly tanned, perfectly plastic-looking bodies, and masked faces — a bevy of human Barbie dolls; and about as erotic. While extremely disconcerting (it certainly should be, anyway), the objectification of these women (and other nude women throughout the film) is complete. Kubrick is showing in startling terms a sexual devolution into inhumanity.

To call this "trash" and "pornography" blatantly misses the point. What we've done to our tender, human selves in our age is pornographic, but graphically making that point is not. Nothing in this film titillates; nothing is gratuitous (I have that on the word of two male viewers I know well, not just my own observation from a woman's perspective). And while there are numerous couplings and sexual acts implied in this scene, the starkness of it comes not from graphic depiction but from our own awareness of the collective dehumanizing effects.

Lest one get the wrong idea, *Eyes Wide Shut* is not one long journey into the dark night of both body and soul. Pacing and changes of scene help break the tension. There are lighter moments too.

### Hints at redemption

And, most interestingly, there are moments of salvation hinted at: a prostitute warns Dr. Harford when he comes upon the orgy that he is in danger, that this place will destroy him; she is not talking only physically. But he doesn't leave, and she is put in a position to offer him redemption — she uses that word uncommon in every-day speech — by actually being willing to lay down her life for him.

It is perhaps an act of grace (though Kubrick likely wouldn't have called it that) that despite the bombardment, neither Bill nor Alice are unfaithful in the end — they redeem their marriage, though they both know it will take work. We have little doubt, though, that they will succeed.

Then there's the curious inclusion of a brightly lit Christmas tree in every apartment, restaurant, hotel lobby and store, on which the camera always lingers for a moment as we enter a scene. What is Kubrick implying? While being careful not to read too much of religious significance into such momentary scenes, it's clear they're there for a reason. In Kubrick, there's nothing that doesn't mean something.

### Irony

The media have hyper-ventilated about "steamy sex scenes" between heart-throb Cruise and the beautiful Nicole Kidman (there aren't any), and a whole lot of other erotica the film contains (it doesn't). The irony of this reaction would not have been lost on Stanley Kubrick. It all too clearly proves his point.



## Church

## Evangelicals join Colombia's effort at peacemaking



Bogota, Colombia's capital city.

COLOMBIA (Compass Direct) – When newly elected Colombian president Andres Pastrana sat down with rebel leaders January 7, he provided some good news in this war-torn, drug-infested country. It was the opening of peace talks.

Evangelical Protestants were proud to have one of their own at the table. A group of civilians called the National Peace Council is monitoring the talks. Catholic and Protestant churches are represented on the council.

### Amazing courage

Pastrana gained respect on all sides when, alone and unarmed, he met the rebel leaders last July. Then he declared five cities where they would hold talks as a demilitarized zone and pulled out national forces from those areas.

For Protestants, participation is part of a decade-long growth into national life. They helped rewrite their nation's constitution in 1991. Their collective suffering from violence has motivated them to seek peace. Their delegate at the peace talks, Ricardo Esquivia, explained their presence. "It's because 250 churches are closed, pastors have been killed, some 2,000 evangeli-

cal families displaced and U.S. missionaries have been kidnapped and killed."

Each year, four to five thousand Colombians die in the fighting. The country holds the world record for kidnapping. More than one million Colombians are displaced internationally. And a third force, armed paramilitary groups, is still active, but not included at the peace table.

Ricardo Esquivia is a Mennonite who has long been working on a peace movement. He once had to flee Colombia when a paramilitary group planned to kill him. Then they got the government to accuse

him of murdering a Catholic priest.

While he was in refuge in Canada, Mennonite churches from all over the world wrote to their Colombian embassies, and the Colombian government withdrew the charges. On his return Esquivia set up a church-based organization that taught peace and justice principles to youth. Since 1995, he has directed the Human Rights Commission of the Evangelical Council of Colombia. "People know we are non-violent," Esquivia said. "They can accuse me of a lot of things, but never of being a guerrilla."

## Churches fighting witchcraft

NIGERIA (REC) – Witchcraft is a problem for some churches in the Reformed Ecumenical Council. The *NKST Newsletter* (Mkar, Nigeria) included a story recently about a man named Nyamor. Following a bad harvest in 1996, Nyamor showed up in Benue State claiming he had the power to find the witches who were causing the bad harvest. Witches, of course, operate in secret, but Nyamor said

he could both find them and destroy their power. For his services, he charged a hefty fee to the community. Then he took a band of ruffians and beat certain community members until they "confessed."

The NKST (Church of Christ in the Sudan among the Tiv) complained, and the government arrested Nyamor. A year later, he was out of prison and showed up in neighboring Taraba State. In a rural area, he claimed that witches were raising a certain beetle that was attacking local crops.

As in Benue, he pointed the finger at some Christians. They were brought to his "court" and he was torturing them there. On a Sunday evening, a pastor led his church members over to Nyamor and demanded the release of their members. Nyamor's activities were paralyzed by this action, the newsletter reported.

## Toronto hosts Billy Graham evangelism 'school'

TORONTO (Religion Today) – Six hundred fifty pastors and their spouses attended the Billy Graham School of Evangelism in Toronto, July 19-22. The school trains pastors to evangelize more effectively and encourages those who are weary of the demands of the ministry. It includes seminars, workshops and corporate worship. Pastors, and some lay persons, came from across Canada, from 40 U.S. states and from several other countries, representing 66 different denominations.

"They kept us busy from 8 a.m. until 9 p.m. with incredible speakers from Canada, the United States, and England," Suzie Martin of Sterling Heights, Mich., told Religion Today. Workshop topics included prayer, proclaiming the Gospel, principles of evangelism, strategies for evangelism, and strategies for discipling new Christians. Praise and worship music was interspersed between the sessions.

Most of the participants were pastors and their spouses, but "these types of schools fire up lay people as well," said Martin, who is a Lutheran Sunday school teacher and prayer minister. "I wish pastors could see the wisdom of feeding their lay leaders in such a way." She described herself as a "burning bush" returning to energize her congregation for God's work.

## Italian Protestants disappointed in papal bull re: indulgences

ITALY (NEV) – The Papal bull "Incarnationis Mysterium" officially announced a Jubilee for the year 2000. To the dismay of Protestants in many lands, however, it contained two lengthy paragraphs on "indulgences." The sale of indulgences in the 16<sup>th</sup> century was one of the sparks that drove Martin Luther to his protests. In recent decades, the Roman Catholic Church has downplayed indulgences, and Roman Catholic and Protestant discussions and accords on the justification and forgiveness of sins have narrowed the chasm between these two huge parts of Christendom.

### 'Questionable' view

Italian Protestants have protested the remarks vigorously. Salvatore Ricciardi, who is a fraternal delegate of the World Alliance of the Reformed Churches (WARC) to the Catholic Church's Central Committee for the Jubilee,

wrote in an open letter that he was "sad and disappointed," because, he says, the bull "is still based on the questionable view of 'forgiveness of the sin – remission of the punishment.'" Ricciardi wrote "the place of indulgence can only be the crucified and risen Christ, and the church cannot administer its conditions, but can only be its witness."

Another Italian Protestant, Paolo Ricca, was not impressed, though the bull included conciliatory language (e.g., "forgiveness freely given by God," and "God's total gift of mercy"). Ricca told the Italian Protestant News Service that this "evocative literary form ... cannot, unfortunately, modify the theological issue at stake.... From a Protestant viewpoint the theological issue is the same as the one indicated by Luther."

## 9,000 Christian kids descend on Toronto

TORONTO (Religion Today) – The largest gathering of youth in the history of the Church of the Nazarene took place in Toronto two weeks ago. More than 9,000 young people and adult sponsors from 30 countries are at Nazarene Youth Conference '99, held July 20-25 in the Metro Toronto Convention Centre and the Air Canada Centre, the latter the home of the Maple Leafs and the Raptors. The week included discipleship training, speakers, worship, music and service projects throughout the city.

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## Church

## Transform society, new leader urges evangelicals

CAROL STREAM, Illinois (EP) – Evangelicals are in danger of becoming "irrelevant" to society, the new leader of the U.S.-based National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) has warned. The church has turned inward and lost its desire to be "a movement that transforms" individuals and society, Kevin Mannoia, 44, told Religion Today.

Mannoia took over last month at the NAE, headquartered in Carol Stream, Ill., which represents 49 Protestant denominations in the United States, including the Christian Reformed Church. He is a bishop with the Free Methodist Church of North America and a former church planter and pastor. Mannoia replaces Don Argue, who resigned in 1998 to become president of Northwest College, an Assemblies of God school in Kirkland, Wash.

Mannoia is still formulating strategy for the NAE. "I do know that we must begin with a strong staff and a strong statement that we are moving into a new day," he said. "We want to build on and not lose our heritage, but move forward."

### Lost spiritual power

Evangelicals "have lost spiritual power," Mannoia said. "We have a big job ahead of us."

Mannoia has spent the last several months reflecting on his new responsibilities, praying and seeking advice from other Christian leaders about what to do, he said. He renewed his conviction that the church is the "singular institution" God created to establish his kingdom on earth. He said he wants the NAE to "call the church to become a movement in transforming our culture."

He recommends that all evangelicals take a spiritual inventory, rediscovering who they are and what their purpose is. "There is a

deep need for individuals and congregations for identity-clarification. Who are we?" he said. To do so, they must become close to God, and "know Him: After knowing the mind of Christ, then comes the passionate desire to make him known."

The church must become an "apostolic movement," Mannoia says. "As John Wesley said, we need to live and preach like the apostles," making an impact on modern American culture by representing Christ in "a spirit of humility."

### Growing around the edges

Mannoia is clear on what he wants evangelical churches to be like. "We desire to see every church a truly worshiping congregation, every church ministering to the poor and the outcasts, every church producing new disciples, every church engaged in world missions, every church characterized by prayer and the work of the Holy Spirit." Churches also must be developing new leaders, he said.

The NAE also needs to "grow around the edges" to embrace other like-minded Christians, Mannoia said. "The term 'evangelical' applies to more people than have felt welcome. On one side we have mainline denominations like the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and others. Then we have charismatic Catholics and Episcopalians. I want to make them feel welcome. There are other groups like the Vineyard. They believe they are evangelical but feel they are not accepted as such."

"We want to be inclusive. Of course there are absolutes – we can't compromise scriptural authority. I am looking for any way we can include more churches and leaders. My prayer is that our current constituents will welcome these."

## Right Paths

*"He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake."*

(Ps. 23:3, NIV)

*"He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name."*

(Ps. 23:3, NLT)

I have recently embarked on a regular schedule of meditative Bible reading. As a professional biblical scholar, I find that this way of reading the Bible is a healthy antidote to the kind of scholarly engagement with the biblical text which is my daily work, and which necessarily requires a measure of critical distance from the text.

Although I firmly believe that my scholarly reading of Scripture, as much as my devotional reading of it, ought to be rooted in and guided by my Christian faith, there is still a very marked difference between these two ways of appropriating the Bible. It is important for my own devotional life – for my personal fellowship with God – that I set aside regular times to read Scripture in a purposely non-scholarly way.

I began with Psalm 23, which is of course one of the most familiar and best-loved passages in the Bible. I discovered that a meditative reading can also be rich in implications for the scholarly task.

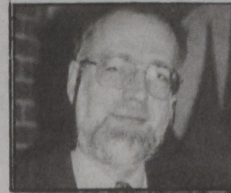
I was struck by the reference to "paths of righteousness" (NIV), which most other contemporary versions of the Bible translate as "right paths." On the level of the shepherd image, this refers to well-worn tracks or trails along which sheep can be safely guided. On that level, the translation "paths of righteousness" is rather misleading, since the Hebrew word used here implies "straightness" or "conformity to law" in a very broad sense. The shepherd knows the *right* paths where he should lead his sheep – paths, for example, that are not next to deep ravines or rushing rivers.

### Right ways of doing things

But everyone understands that the paths of the shepherd metaphor refers on another level to paths of a different sort, and it is on that level that we can justify the translation "paths of righteousness." The psalmist is referring to the ways in which we live our lives. However, we must understand this "righteousness" in a very broad sense.

"Paths of righteousness" refer in general to right ways of doing things, to the broad range of responsible human action. And those right ways are understood as conforming to the standards of a given world order. There are right paths and there

## Chapter & Verse



• Al Wolters  
Mary S. Hulst Antonides

are wrong paths, and the distinction depends on whether a given path conforms to the way God designed it to be.

In my opinion, one of the cardinal differences between the religion of humanism and the religion of the Bible is that, according to humanism we must *make* our way in the world, whereas according to the Bible we must *find* our way in the world. Biblically speaking, reality is not a trackless waste, but a forest with pathways. We need to seek out the right paths, and walk in them.

### Guidance and purpose

But we are not left to our own devices as we seek to find the right paths of God's world. The Shepherd *guides* us in the paths of righteousness. How does he do this? It is through his revelation, both in his Word and his works, that he guides us in our search. Another well-known verse from the Psalms puts it succinctly: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path" (Ps 119:105).

Biblical revelation is like a light which illumines the path we are to walk – but the path needs to be there, and visible, if the light is to help. God guides us both by the light of his Word and by the structure of his works – the one always in connection with the other.

God guides us in the right paths for only one reason: "for his name's sake." The biblical view of the world is thoroughly theocentric (centred upon God and everything it exhorts humans to be and to do) is ultimately focused on the name and prestige of Yahweh.

As we seek the right paths in God's world under the light of God's Word, it is to bring honor to his name, to vindicate his reputation in the world. In the words of the familiar Latin slogan: *solus Deo gloria*, to God alone be the glory.

*Al Wolters teaches Bible and Greek at Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ontario. The above is an abbreviated version of a meditation which he gave at the recent conference on hermeneutics held at Redeemer.*

## Lebanese Christians accused of helping rebels

BEIRUT (Religion Today) – Lebanese officials are accusing a Christian ministry of collaborating with rebel forces. A report by the country's Military Investigating Magistrate accuses Middle East TV employee Paul Younis and 15 other workers at the station of co-operating with the South Lebanese Army, a pro-Israel Christian militia, International Christian Embassy Jerusalem said.

Middle East TV, owned by

Virginia Beach-based Christian Broadcasting Network, is based in Marjayoun, South Lebanon. It airs Christian and other programming in several languages to a potential audience of 200 million people in 17 countries, CBN said.

The military arrested Younis at a checkpoint in South Lebanon June 28. The 20 year-old switch operator, who inserts videotapes into their proper machines for on-air play, will be tried by a

military court and could get seven years in prison if convicted.

The charges are false, Wes Hylton, Middle East TV station manager, said. "The Lebanese Army authorities have wrongfully accused Paul Younis of being an employee of the South Lebanese."

The arrest papers also wrongly state that South Lebanese Army head Gen. Antoine Lahad owns the station, he said. "We are not operated, owned, or controlled by

[the SLA]."

Lebanese authorities are trying to intimidate the station because its news coverage is generally sympathetic to Israel and Christians in the region, ICEJ said. Marjayoun is in the Israeli-controlled security zone in South Lebanon and has a strong Christian presence. The U.S. State Department reportedly was asked to intervene, but refused, saying the affair is an internal Lebanese matter.

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## Short Story

# Rev. Bokma and the Gretzky card

Paul Spoelstra

She was 87-years-old and complained that everyone else at the Sacred Mountain Nursing Home was too old. Bokma might have told her that she was getting up in years herself, but she wouldn't allow a word in edgewise.

It was Sunday, in the early afternoon, and they were seated on a cedar bench in a sun-drenched conservatory. A procession of residents parading through an adjacent corridor towards the dining hall was the subject of her commentary.

*"Who knows what might end up in your pocket next? Use your brains, man!"*

"See that lady? All she ever does is gossip. And that man there? He was married to my mother's cousin. I could tell you stories about him — he was such a loose-life. And that lady, I play *mens erger je niet* with her, but she cheats."

The elevator doors opened and a new group headed to the hall.

"Oh, Dominee, see that man? One night last week when we are eating supper he turned up outside the windows of the dining room. Standing in the garden, he was. His teeth were out, he had a tin pot on his head, and with a cigar he made it look like smoke was coming out of his ears. He's crazy!"

She rested an arthritic hand on Bokma's, which was resting on his cane, and continued in a more subdued tone.

"Don't get old if you can help it, Taeke. You have too much time to think. Do you know that in 48 years of marriage I don't think I ever told my man five times that I really loved him? We were so busy, working so hard in the potatoes, we didn't think about love. But I do now. Here I sit, and all of us stacked up like we're in a pigeon coop. But we shouldn't be negative. By the way: you preached this morning. I thought you were supposed to be retired."

Bokma paused a moment before responding, to be certain she had finished. "Yes, I'm preaching three Sundays this month, in Zion church."

At that moment Bokma's "chauffeur," Ford pensioner Eppo

Terwolde approached them, his right hand clutching some matches, his left hand sliding up and down one of his suspenders. He was clearly relieved about something, and burst freely into the middle of their conversation.

"I finally found some matches. We don't have to stick around here anymore. Let's go someplace and find a good cup of coffee. You can't find one here, you know."

"*Dat weet ik.*" ("I know that") Liesje replied wearily. "The food is even worse. I think they put everything through a giant Calvinator." She turned again to Bokma. "Did you know my daughter goes to Zion church? I wish you would preach in the church where they take us. You were always a real dominee. Not like nowadays when all you get is a little stew. And the music. All that ge-jingle and ge-jangle of guitars. They even play flamingo guitar! In the church! Is that right? What are we? Zigeuners?"

Bokma leaned towards her and kissed her on the forehead.

"Let's consider these questions another day. Would you like me to accompany you to the dining hall, Liesje?"

"No, Taeke, no. You were always so sweet and patient, like Job. You go on. I don't feel like eating today. You can go now."

The men departed, passing through the automatic doors into the brilliant summer sunshine. Terwolde nudged Bokma. "Good time for a cigarette, eh Bokma?"

"Almost my exact thoughts, Eppo."

Bokma patted his coat pocket in reference to the Du Mauriers they mutually owned, but when he slipped his hand into the pocket his fingers settled around a small, unfamiliar plastic container. It was a hockey card: Curtis Joseph of the Toronto Maple Leafs.

Bokma was surprised. "How do you suppose this fellow got here, Eppo?"

"How should I know? Use your brains, man."

The following Sunday morning was as hot and humid as the previous one. Bokma hung his suit jacket in the cloakroom, as he had the previous Sunday. He had observed that it was the custom for Sunday school children to pass through the cloakroom en route to their classes. It seemed to him that a child must have put the hockey card in his jacket as they filed past through the room. Bokma exposed the upper third of the card, in the



A photo of Wayne Gretzky, autographed by Wayne and his father.

hope it might be reclaimed.

The consistory room clock reached 10 o'clock and an elder stood up. "Well, I guess it's time." A few other men glanced at their watches as if there might be some doubt, but they ultimately nodded their heads in agreement. One of them prayed, asking "above all for a special measure of your spirit for Reverend Dr. Bokma."

He entered the sanctuary and shook hands with the last of the elders to file past him, a public demonstration of their concord. Bokma then climbed the steps to the pulpit, took a sip of the water placed there for him, gripped the edges of the lectern (like a goalie, whacking his posts with his stick), and peered out at the congregation filed in front of him in narrow, hard, oak-bench rows.

"Good morning," he said.

Following the service Bokma immediately went to the cloakroom where he had hung his jacket. He went to his pocket and discovered Curtis Joseph with a companion: Wayne Gretzky. On the border of the new arrival were

the words "O-Pee-Chee" and "Edmonton Oilers 1978-1979." Bokma was struck by the young Gretzky's vulnerable appearance.

In Eppo's Honda he pulled out the second card and showed it to his friend. Terwolde blew up.

"Give me that bloody card and I'll throw it the window out! That fellow has beaten my Leafs so many times. That Gretzky is the worst thing to come from Brantford since the telephone. Here, give it to me."

Eppo reached for the card, but Bokma had already tucked it into his pocket.

"Eppo, he's retired, you know, in case you hadn't heard. You don't have to worry about him anymore. But this is a mystery. Who is putting these things in my pocket?"

"Don't worry. I have a plan. These things get into your pockets when you are preaching, right?"

"Right."

"And it happened last week and this week, so it will probably happen again next week, right?"

"Possibly."

"Well, I'm going to hide out by

your coat. I'll watch the children as they walk past. And then I'll catch him."

"Eppo, you're over-reacting".

"But who knows what might end up in your pocket next? Use your brains, man!"

On the following Sunday, Terwolde executed his plan, a plan based on reasoning which Bokma had learned long ago not to challenge.

Terwolde installed himself in the bottom of a sturdy plywood boat that was destined for use in the Vacation Bible School's presentation of Jonah and the Whale. The boat was behind a row of choir gowns. Eppo created a gap in the row to provide a sightline to Bokma's jacket. When the children were excused for the classes, prior to the sermon, they would file past the rack, and he would learn the identity of the child.

Alone, however, recumbent in the bottom of the boat, in the stagnant air of the cloakroom, Terwolde found it difficult to stay awake. He succumbed to sleep halfway through the reading of the Law. He awoke to the sound of his pastor-friend's voice, urging, "Eppo, Eppo! Wake up! The service is over. Eppo, are you with us?"

"Of course, I'm with you. Where do you think that I think I am? What ... what about your jacket? What's in it today?" Terwolde struggled out of the boat.

"Nothing new, Eppo."

"Great. Nothing new. After all the trouble I went through. Well then, I'll go to the washroom if that's all right with you. My bladder is about ready to burst."

Bokma turned from the departing Terwolde and began to don his jacket. As he slipped his arms through the sleeves his eyes were drawn to the door leading into the sanctuary and then to the Hals-like portrait of an eight-year-old, who stood transfixed several paces away.

Bokma smiled and stepped toward him, but the boy retreated. Intuitively the older man reached into his pocket and withdrew the Gretzky card. He held it up for the boy to see. They remained in that posture for several seconds. Finally the boy spoke.

"Are you, like, a pwoffet or something?"

"Now there's a good question! And here's another: Do these things belong to you?" Bokma held up the cards.

"Yup, they do. The 'Retzky card my dad gave me. He doesn't live with us anymore. I don't want



the card. He said it's a rookie card and I should, like, save it, but I don't want it."

"You really should keep these things, um ...what's your name?"

"Tyson. Why should I keep it? I'm not even supposed to touch the 'Retzky card.'"

"Well, Tyson, I think you should keep them."

"I'll take Joseph back. He's, like, awesome. But you can keep the other one. I don't want a 'Retzky card. Can you ask God to make him come back home? Like, my dad I mean? I know you talk to God, and I saw your coat, and I thought you could talk to God about my dad. I saw your black coat when you came to church. It's pretty hot to wear a coat, don't you think?"

"Yes, it is. But by wearing this coat I'm keeping a promise I made to my mother a long time ago." Bokma tucked the card in his pocket and continued, "How would it be if I talked to your mother? Could I meet her? Would you like to carry my cane? Do you know why I use a cane? - Yes, that's okay, swing it around if you like. - I use a cane because I got shot in the knee in a place called Indonesia."

Tyson's eyes widened.

"Were you killed?"

"No, I was not killed. Only a little part of me was."

Passing through the vestibule doors and then into the hall, Tyson finally stopped near a woman who was buckling an infant into a car seat.

"This is my, like, mom."

The woman looked up and greeted him.

"Good morning, Reverend Bokma. Tyson wasn't running around in the sanctuary was he? Or doing something he shouldn't

have? Oh, I'm sorry" - she held out her hand - "my name is Lisa DeBeer. I was in the nursery this morning. Ty, would you give the man his cane back before you hit someone in the eye with it?"

"Not at all. Your son is behaving very well. I've just made his acquaintance, and I've come to ask if I can take him out to McDonald's some day this week."

"McDonald's? Awesome! Can we, Mom?"

### **DeBeer was outraged. "Idiot! Are you crazy? It's a rookie!"**

Bokma leaned down and whispered, "Don't worry. She'll say Yes. By the way: a prophet would probably have lunch at an Olive Garden, not a McDonalds."

The boy glanced at him uncomprehendingly and bolted off to meet a comrade.

Lisa looked at Bokma.

"He'll talk your ear off."

"Oh, that's all right. Ministers can listen too. Are you on a bus route? That would make things a little easier, although it is possible for me to arrange other transportation. I have a friend who drives me places. By the way, I would like your husband's phone number. I want to talk to him, if you don't mind."

"Oh, that's what this is about." Her smile faded. "Ty told you? You know, I still think we could make it work. But Glen doesn't seem to think so. Ty is taking it pretty hard."

"How long have you been apart?"

Thirty-two days. Ever since she came along" - she pointed to the baby - "It seemed too much for

him - Glen, I mean. What can you do? Oh, by the way, I know that you visit my mother at the Home - Liesje Nyholt - and it is much appreciated. But she - my mom - doesn't know anything about this yet, about Glen and me. OK?"

"OK."

Glen DeBeer reluctantly agreed to an interview the following Tuesday afternoon at a west-end Tim Horton's. His contribution to the conversation might have been scripted, thought Bokma, who had heard it all many times before.

It was her fault. It was the economy's fault. It was his father's fault. It was the church's fault. "And it's not like I won't visit them. I'm not dropping out of their lives. In the end, I think what I did was best for everyone."

"For Tyson, too?"

"Do you think he needs a miserable old man like me around?"

"Yes."

"Well ... I'll help him understand when he gets older. Anyway, I've gotta go now. Gotta play baseball tonight, and I've gotta pick up my glove. Thanks for your concern and everything. Gotta go. See ya."

DeBeer was not being intentionally flippant with these closing remarks, but Bokma took them that way, and the dam containing his indignation burst. He reached into his pocket and pulled out the

Gretzky card.

"Before you go I want to return this to you. Your son doesn't really want it." Bokma slipped the card out of its sleeve, took it between the thumb and index fingers of both hands, tore it in half, and tossed the halves across the table at DeBeer. This action surprised even Bokma, because it was neither characteristic nor premeditated.

DeBeer was outraged. "Idiot! Are you crazy? It's a rookie!" He shouted these words, and the stridency of his voice alarmed the sole waitress in the coffee shop. She dropped a mug. It didn't break, but bounced and rolled on the floor.

"I beg your pardon." Bokma stood up to leave. "I am not crazy. I am a minister of the gospel. You have neither the right nor the authority to lecture me on the worth of things. If you had any sense of values you would go home this minute. You ripped your family in two. Why would you worry about a hockey card? They print these by the tens of thousands. But there's only one family with your imprint on it."

"But that card was valuable! I gave it to my son."

"And he's a rookie too. And he doesn't want it. He wants you. You're his Gretzky." With this, Bokma stood, marched out of the door and turned up the sidewalk. A glance through the Tim Horton's window left a final impression: De

Beer's face still contorted with anger; and the studied indifference of the waitress.

He was sorry for upsetting her. He felt a twinge in his back and a throbbing in his knee, and the short walk to where Eppo was parked seemed interminable.

In the car Eppo noticed his friend's distress. "How did it go, Taeke?" he asked.

Bokma told him the story. He lamented his own lack of restraint. "I've never done anything like that before. It was the wrong thing to do."

"You're right, Taeke, about being wrong. But, you never know. God can work it out for the good. What I find so strange is that that Sunday when you visited Liesje Nyholt, the whole time you had her grandson's card in your pocket. Now that's what I call predestination. But you know what Taeke? You'll have to buy another card for that boy."

"Of course, I will. In fact, I was wondering if we could find one of those sport shops on the way home. What was the year? '78- '79? What do you think they will charge?"

"Maybe four or five dollars. How much could a picture of a hockey player be worth? Use your brains, man."

Paul Spoelstra teaches French at Hamilton District Christian High School, Hamilton, Ontario.

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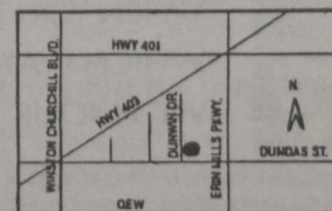
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## Christians Engaging Culture

# Salting the earth and lighting the world: The Reformed witness to culture



Shiao Chong

When I was an English major at a public university, I tried to understand my studies through the eyes of my Christian faith. One day, as I sat reading a book on a Christian perspective on literature, a fellow Christian student came up to say hi. As he sat down, I eagerly showed him the book. To my utter surprise, he scolded me with a flurry of complaints: "What does Christianity have to do with literature? Christianity is about religion and morals. It has absolutely nothing to do with literature!"

My fellow student has separated his faith from his studies. For him, Christianity does not affect literature or any other area of culture. I, however, believe – and this is part of the Reformed heritage – that there is nothing in culture and life that is not touched by our faith, and that the proper attitude toward culture is to reform it.

But how do we go about reforming culture? What basic strategies do we use?

In Matthew 5:13-16, Jesus described Christians as the "salt of the earth" and "the light of the world." I think these two metaphors can help us understand how

we engage culture.

All of us are called to be salt and light, and we've heard it often. But in order to know what this means, we need first to understand these biblical metaphors in their historical context. From this, we can derive a general strategy for engaging culture. Then finally, we will need some basic steps to help us be good salt and true light.

## Making culture taste good

It is commonly thought that Jesus, in Matthew 5, was pointing to the use of salt in preserving meat from decay. Therefore, Christians help prevent the moral and spiritual decay in culture. And as light overcomes darkness, Christians help dispel evil in culture.

The *InterVarsity Press Bible Background Commentary*, however, suggests instead that Jesus was probably referring to the

**Whether we like it or not, we are already sprinkled out as salt; we are already placed on lampstands to shine.**

equally common use of salt to flavor and season food. The Greek word for saltiness in verse 13 – "But if the salt loses its saltiness (NIV)" – is more accurately translated as "taste," as in the NRSV. Therefore, rather than preserving culture from decaying, our role is making culture "taste good."

We are not trying to preserve something good from turning bad, but the reverse; we are making something tasteless into something tasteful. This is very much like how God acts: turning suffering into joy, sickness into health, sinners into saints.

In the light metaphor, the commentary points out that Jesus was talking, in his societal context, about small wicker oil lamps. People in ancient Palestine used these lamps to light up their homes. The average Palestinian home had very few windows, and thus would get very dark. But these small lamps, unlike our electric lamps, gave very little light. Therefore, in order to get the most out of these lamps, people would elevate them, usually by putting them on a lampstand. Although these lamps did not totally overcome the darkness, they made a dark home more cozy. Likewise, Christians are to shine in the world, making it a more warm and comfortable home for all, even if we do not initially overcome all darkness.

How does this help in understanding our engagement with culture? Both metaphors suggest transforming our environment in positive ways. Salt makes food tastier and the lamps make a dark home brighter. Secondly, they suggest that this transformation happens in relatively subtle ways: a dash of salt to season a dish or small oil lamps strategically placed to make a home cozy. These suggestions point to a strategy of reformation for engaging culture.

## Regaining creation

Al Wolters, in his book *Creation Regained*, explained what reformation entails by contrasting it with two other strategies: revolution and "restitution." Revolution is a strategy that aims at overthrowing corrupt institutions by replacing them with brand-new alternatives. For instance, we may want to entirely replace certain things in our culture with new Christian alternatives: pop music with Christian contemporary music (CCM), or secular TV with Christian TV.

Restitution seeks to preserve and restore old institutions in the present, assuming that the "oldies are goodies." For instance, we may want to preserve classical music as the only worthwhile music, arguing that it is more Christ-honoring than pop music.

Reformation, however, seeks gradual renewal of cultural institutions and practices. We do not discard corrupt cultural forms and replace them with either brand-new or ancient alternatives. But we gradually reform them by offering alternatives that seek to preserve

their integrity while improving them and moving them toward God's norms.

We seek whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely and admirable (Philippians 4:8) in culture, bringing that to its fullest potential while suppressing that which is sinful. Therefore, instead of simply replacing pop music with either CCM or classical music (though they both have a place in culture), we can work within pop music, bringing out its best qualities while redirecting its idolatrous views toward God's norms in creation.

This strategy, I think, is most faithful to our call to be salt and light.

## Five Cs of being salt and light

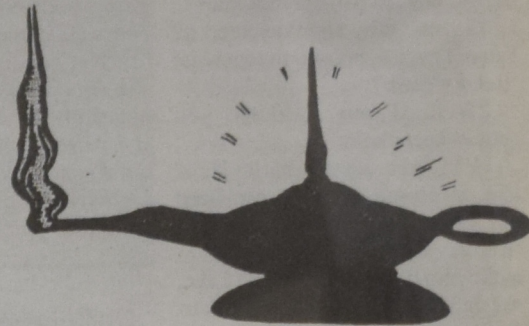
How do we carry out this strategy of reformation? How do we become good salt and true light? David Gill, in his book *The Opening of the Christian Mind*, suggests the following steps which I call the five C's of reforming culture.

1) We need a **conviction** that Jesus Christ is Lord of all areas of life. For example, if we engage pop music, we need to be convinced that Jesus rules over that part of culture, too. We cannot abandon pop music to Satan. We need to work with Christ in redeeming it.

2) We need **courage** to act on our convictions. We need to act in the public realm and be willing to face opposition. Whether we like it or not, we are already sprinkled out as salt; we are already placed on lampstands to shine. Like a city on a hill, we cannot hide from culture. If we are too cowardly to be salty or if we hide under a bowl, then we are as worthless as saltless salt and invisible light.

3) We need **creativity** to find ways of being faithful to our convictions. We need to discern or even invent alternative ways for us to fulfill the best in culture while suppressing its worst. The Christian musician engaging in pop music could find ways to produce good pop music that reflects his or her faith without alienating the intended audience or compromising the musical genre.

4) We need **competence** in carrying out our creative alternatives.



The Christian musician, for example, has to be a competent musician and/or songwriter in order to effectively produce good pop music that is both God-glorifying and audience-pleasing. Incompetence and mediocrity only dishonor God and diminish our witness.

5) We need a **community** to support and correct our discipleship in the world. We cannot do all this alone. One grain of salt makes as much difference to taste as one small oil lamp to a whole house. Christian musicians, as individuals and together, need to learn from other Christian artists who have gone before. They also need the support of a Christian community to encourage their efforts, to pray for them and to gently correct them when they stray.

These five Cs provide us with the basics in carrying out cultural reformation. They must not be separated from a moral lifestyle, which Jesus also meant in calling us salt and light. Above all, we need God's grace and wisdom in all five steps.

## Making culture tastier and brighter

Wherever God has placed us, whether in business, agriculture, education or politics, we need to be God's salt and light. We may falter or face discouraging results; our creative alternatives may be imperfect. But we know that God helps us who are merely his co-workers.

We do not need a lot of salt to make a dish taste better. Neither do we need thousands of lamps to make a home comfortably bright. So let us be encouraged in our efforts, small or insignificant they may seem, knowing that God will use, and is using, them to redeem this world.

*Shiao Chong is the admissions counsellor at Redeemer College in Ancaster, Ontario.*

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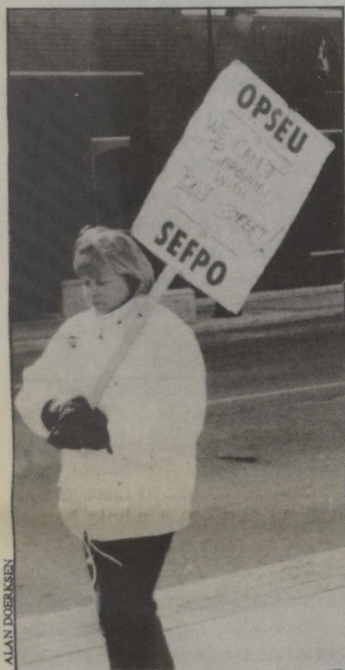


## Christians Engaging Culture

# Christians in labor relations: Why bother?

## Douglas Ball

TV sex is okay but Christian TV is dangerous, according to the Canadian Radio and Television Commission (CRTC). The CRTC denied a licence to the Catholic Eternal Word Television Network because its programs would undermine Canada's social cohesion. But a licence was granted to the Playboy Channel with no misgivings.



A civil servant on strike in St. Catharines, Ont.

strengthen Christian organizations that demonstrate faithful obedience to Christian principles.

## 'Just Jesus and me' not biblical

It is un-Christian, maybe even anti-Christian, to pursue a solitary life of religious exhilaration ("It's Jesus and me, and we're having a great time together!") while neglecting or simply de-emphasizing God's call to act Christianly in all areas of creation. And now that Christians cannot presume a kindly reception by the world, the urgency and necessity to show ourselves as worthwhile contributors to "worldly" activities is all the stronger.

But how to do it? First, our mind-set matters. We will be of little use if we think that the Christian's sole duty is to rescue souls out of the world because the world is inherently evil and will be burnt up anyway at history's end. If we think that's the case, then we will ignore the whole mess along the way to that ultimate conclusion, putting aside the call to be salt and light.

And we'll be hardly more effective if we think our calling is only to lob bricks at the players, providing moral critique when they get out of line. Christians are ineffective in society if all we do is mount placard-carrying opposition to Disney. It's better to work together to finance high-quality movies with a deep Christian message, like *Spitfire Grill*.

Or we might fool ourselves that we're being faithful when we submerge completely in world affairs, doing the good things that others are doing but without distinguishing ourselves too much from the crowd. If we find it difficult to think Christianly about what we're doing, then why bother? We're tempted to believe good works are good works, no matter who does them or for what reason.

Some good can come from the above approaches. But we can do better through principled, collective Christian action.

## Principled and collective

*Principled* Christian action is social engagement with an eye to God's Kingdom and its principles. It is the response to God's call to be involved in the world for God's glory.

*Collective* Christian action is social engagement that recognizes we can be a more effective influence if we work together. And together we are more visible than



At the bargaining table: "The manner in which the agreement is forged and the perspective which the parties bring to negotiations have a huge impact on the quality of the agreement."

beaver alone, our light flickering faintly or unnoticed. A Christian baseball team is more likely to influence the game as a team than as individual believers scattered throughout the league. What's more, collective action (i.e., establishing varieties of Christian organizations and institutions) fits with biblical teaching about the Body of Christ; we are not solitary believers but believers in community.

## Influencing workplace structure

This thinking sustains the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC). The workplace is society in microcosm; and labor relations are human relations. Injustice, exploitation, disempowerment, arbitrariness, favoritism – these and many more sins are as prevalent in the workplace as anywhere. Working against these, unions, like governments, can be a means of God's grace; they balance the power and protect and advocate the interests of workers, even in Christian establishments.

CLAC is a Christian presence in this important area of social life – the workplace. It is the only structural Christian presence in Canada's workplaces.

The structure of the workplace and its working arrangements are heavily influenced for good or ill by the collective agreement. A collective agreement spells out the rules that regulate how management and non-management workers interact with one another, just as laws govern us in the wider society. The manner in which the agreement is forged and the perspective which the parties bring to

If you come to contract negotiations in this warlike way, you derail any possibility of arriving at normative, life-enhancing working relationships. You close off possibilities for meaningful justice, for proper authority relationships, for honest discipline, for fair compensation. And yet this mentality drives most union leaders and too many employers.

So much for structural influence. What about the Christian presence represented by CLAC?

## Living the words

Francis of Assisi said something to this effect: "Preach the gospel in all places and times, and if necessary use words." This could be CLAC's motto, for it nicely captures the idea that the most winsome way to preach the gospel is to live it. CLAC is a union, not an evangelistic organization. It does union things. However, its most important value is that it is a Christian voice for normative, reconciled, healing relationships in the workplace.

This is a call not often heard in a labor's wasteland. We struggle to apply Christian principles to the workplace, principles like co-operative labor relations, a high view of work, and a respect for all persons as God's imagebearers. Living, albeit imperfectly, by these principles, we preach the gospel with our lives.

This is no small matter. We have offered workers a healthy, real-world Christian alternative to aggressive bitterness and class hatreds. And we have visibly demonstrated Christian living in action – the only effective corrective to the anti-Christian caricatures so prevalent today.

negotiations have a huge impact on the quality of the agreement.

A union which brings an aggressive, management-is-the-class-enemy attitude to the negotiations poisons the bargaining, the agreement and the relationships beyond. Management can equally undermine good, wholesome working relationships by the attitudes it brings to the table. The workplace will stink from the rotten influence of that outlook, whoever holds it. A bad agreement is one tainted by belligerent adversarialism, regardless of how "just" the settlement language appears to be.

CLAC's structural influence is achieved through a working alternative to that warring mindset. This union strongly opposes the hostile spirit revealed in the comments of a pro-union author and economics professor who recently wrote: "The best unions have come to see that negotiations must be approached as a campaign, with many battles and a wide variety of tactics" (emphasis in the original).

Douglas Ball is a national representative of the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC) and a director of its support network. CLAC's headquarters are in Mississauga, Ontario.

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## Christians Engaging Culture

# Art as a 21st century calling

Hilary Brand and Adrienne Chaplin

*We simply cannot afford another century in which the tastes of the public and the tastes of its aesthetic commentators are as divergent as they have been during the years of modernism.*

Waldemar Januszczak

*It is shortsighted, not to say stupid, in the correct desire to be relevant as Christian artists in an un-Christian age, to pick up the secular fashion of the immediate generation before us and immerse [yourself] in that as your tradition. That's why Christian artists so often seem to be a generation late.*

Calvin Seerveld

We have to acknowledge it: across the range of art forms – music, poetry, media, visual arts – there are very few Christian ground-breakers. Is it just that Christians are irrevocably old-fashioned? Certainly, the refusal of the evangelical wing of the church to engage with the arts has left it struggling with an artistic ethos that is several generations behind.

There undoubtedly is a new generation of Christians desperate to move on and be part of the contemporary arts scene, but as Calvin Seerveld points out, this very desire to be “relevant” can be the artist’s downfall.

In the urgent quest to communicate with lost humanity, the Christian picks on “the secular fashion of the immediate generation before”; in other words, one that is still popular, but relatively safe. Having alighted on that form, it is all too easy to stick with it, rather than experiment. Hence the tendency of Christians always to be at least a generation behind the times.

Seerveld believes that before the church can make a really dynamic contribution to the arts, it has to have its own “cultural infrastructure.” There is a catching-up process involved which cannot be circumvented or avoided....

## Telling our stories

The world wants stories, not one big one, but many small ones. Stories in which we recognize our own lives, narratives rooted in personal experience and a real, earthy, gritty world; anecdotes and



*In His Light, an etching by George Langbroek*

metaphors and illustrations that illuminate small-t truth, rather than lectures that demand allegiance to capital-T Truth.

All of this should present no problem to Christians.... Jesus took the everyday world of his hearers and transformed it into something different. He told stories that surprised and jolted and lodged in the memory and changed perceptions.

He used the simple (a man fishing, a woman searching for a coin) and the absurd (one blind man leading another, someone with a beam in his eye trying to take a splinter from someone else’s).

He drew from psychology (how people react at a dinner party) and horticulture (how vines need to be pruned).

He told stories that seemed to be about comfort for the underdog: a prodigal son returning to his father; a beggar rewarded in the after-life while a rich man had to suffer; and gave them a twist in the tail. It was his hearers who were the resentful older brother, they were the ones who had been

warned of judgment, and never listened.

Sometimes he explained his stories, often he did not. Sometimes their meanings were obvious, sometimes frankly baffling.

His life, too, was crammed with incidents that told the story a different way. Meetings with tarts and lepers and quislings and widows and little kids became flesh-and-blood images of encounter with Father God.

Familiar objects like wine goblets and loaves and donkeys and towels and bowls of water became symbols of a spiritual dynamic. He turned his audience into part of the story-telling, inviting a small boy with loaves and fishes up on stage as part of the act! He subverted traditional myth, enacting the triumphant messianic entry in the knowledge that the ending would be all too different.

In many ways, Jesus is an amazing model for the Christian artist in a postmodern age. Like him, our raw material is the everyday world around us. Like him, we can take

the familiar stories and images of our day and subvert them into something unexpected.

However, this does *not* mean the artist’s job is retelling Jesus’ parables or his life, not even trying to give them a new gloss by setting them in our own time.

In fact, it is *not* even necessarily telling parables [at all]. Parables, as such, are the tool of teachers, not artists. They are stories told with the clear aim of communicating a specific message. Art, by contrast, is the articulation of our perceptions and experiences of our inner and outer world, irrespective of whether or not this conveys a specific “message.”

*Change comes from small initiatives which, imitated, become the fashion. We cannot wait for great vision from great people, for they are in short supply at the end of history. It is up to us to light our own small fires in the darkness.*

Charles Handy

Our task is to tell the stories that arise from our own culture, our own experience. God’s created world is a renewable resource. Donkeys and vines might have been great symbols in first-century Palestine. Supermarket trolleys, airports and the Internet are more appropriate at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> – and no less spiritual.

If we believe God is at work in his world in every generation, then his fingerprints will be as evident in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as in the first chapter of Genesis.

At the end of the day, people cannot live without a grand story.... In telling the stories of our world, we are not denying the existence of a Christian “grand story.” Rather we are breaking through the barriers that have been raised against it.

We are funding the imagination, opening up the possibility of wonder, not so much providing answers as reminding the world of questions it has forgotten to ask. We are sowing seeds, confident that human minds are still fertile soil and that God will never fail to provide water and sun.

## Swimming against the tide

Jesus Christ has given us an example in one other aspect of Christian living – that of swimming against the tide. And over the centuries his followers have had

plenty of practice. Christians know how to be a minority.

It is an experience that is both a strength and a weakness. At worst, it leads to a ghetto mentality and a stubborn determination to ignore fashion on principle. At best, it creates a courageous individuality and a refusal to be browbeaten into the latest artistic political correctness.

**Knee-jerk irony: the tendency to make flippant ironic comments as a reflexive matter of course in everyday conversation.**

**Derision pre-emption: A life-style tactic: the refusal to go out on any sort of emotional limb so as to avoid mockery from peers. Derision pre-emption is the main goal of knee-jerk irony.**

Douglas Coupland

There are many ways in which Christians can, and must swim against the contemporary art tide, and a few of them are worth picking out:

## Rejecting ‘knee-jerk irony’:

Irony is the *lingua franca* of the postmodern age. For Generation X ... irony is almost the only way to communicate. As a tactic to make a point it is a valid language for Christians, and a skill we should learn as an effective communication tool. After all, it is hard not to picture an ironic smile hovering on Jesus’ lips as some of his deadpan comments had their barbed effect: “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her”; “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s”; and in answer to Pilate’s leading question: “It is as you say.”

But as “a reflexive matter of course” irony has no place in either the art or the conversation of a believer. Why? Because irony communicates detachment and lack of involvement. It implies ambiguity and a refusal to commit.

None of these qualities characterized Jesus. He knew when to be ironic, but he also knew when to be passionate and straightforward and affirming and real. His followers should aim for nothing less.

It takes courage to lower the ironic mask and offer honesty and vulnerability.... But they are qualities that have a compelling attraction in a cynical world. Society may be puzzled, embarrassed or infuriated by us, but it will also be



forced to give its grudging admiration. Rather as it did with Jesus, in fact.

#### Refusing pretension and power:

From John Hegley to Sarah Lucas, Jarvis Cocker to Quentin Tarantino, one thing for which we can applaud the artists of our generation is their determination to fight against pretension....

[But] the arts establishment is as pompous and pretentious as it ever was, perhaps far more so. For all those who stand out against it, there are many others who learn to play the game....

Jesus, far from being meek and mild, was a scourge to the establishment of his day. He expressed vitriolic anger at the establishment's control over ordinary people's lives, and used radical direct action against its commercial power base. But more often he simply pointed out its absurdities. He poked gentle fun at his society's value systems, told his stories and drew his verbal pictures and left his hearers to draw their own conclusions.

Far from being a self-publicist, he frequently told the recipients of his amazing gifts not to tell anyone, and slipped away just when he had the chance to have fans and critics alike eating out of his hand. He avoided adulation – the one notable exception, the "Triumphal Entry" into Jerusalem was, in practice, a "March to the Scaffold" (and perhaps a conscious use of dramatic irony).

Jesus' choices in the face of both applause and criticism were forged long before, in the loneliness of the wilderness. By the time he found himself in a public role, he was already secure in his private choice – to serve God only. The artist would do well to do the same....

*To me, the purpose of the arts is to introduce people to life in all its breadth and complexity and thereby to find oneself, others, the world and God more fully.*

Gary Collins

#### Affirming ultimate values:

The arts world has had its fill of nihilism. The Christian world is sick to death of dogma, sentimentality and trivia. The world at large is satiated with sex and shopping.

To a society just as turbulent

and dissatisfied, Jesus gave no easy answers. What he did offer was love of both God and neighbor, and hope of needs met and lives remade. He preached gratitude for good gifts and action against injustice. He affirmed that the world was a marvelous place and that God has never, and will never give up on it.

Like Jesus, the Christian artist is called to an affirmation of basic and lasting values. Like Jesus, we will demonstrate more than we will speak. Like Jesus, our authority will come from costly truthfulness and the crucible of hard choices.

#### Nailing our colors to the mast

Many of us would hate to be called a "Christian artist" or be referred to as making "Christian art." Apart from sounding rather pretentious, it is hardly a major selling point to galleries or commissioning editors!

But there is something which justifies these scandalous labels, even for those not doing overtly religious art. As we have already seen, worldviews pervade our life and actions in all that we do.

Of course, it is possible to wear two different worldview "spectacles" – one in church and one in the studio, and a surprising number of Christians seem unconcerned at doing so.

But if we do our art with any integrity, our Christian worldview will unconsciously and inescapably enter our work.

We are, whether we like the label or not, "Christian artists."

Animator Nick Park: "At art school, I felt guilty for a long time that I was getting excited about ideas that were nothing to do with God, but I never got any ideas about God that were any good. I feel I've just got to do things which mean something to me and which come from the heart. I have to listen to myself. But I do regard my films as Christian."

There is one other reason why it is not such a bad thing to accept the label "Christian artist." To do so is to acknowledge that we are not lone islands, entire unto ourselves, but part of something much larger: a community of the disciples of

Jesus Christ reaching around the globe, back over two millennia and forward into generations to come.

And there is much to be gained by actively gathering together with others not ashamed to wear the label; forming ourselves into like-minded creative communities; working, laughing and praying together, letting the sparks fly and the rough edges rub against each other until we are honed sharp and strong to meet the world.

Could it really be that God wants to take the feeble and frag-

*A faith project in Christian artistry will never be healthy among us until there is a living sense of Christian community, and the misplaced emphasis on the "individual" has been corrected. God has set things up so that cultural endeavor is always a communal enterprise, done by trained men and women in concert, gripped by a spirit that is larger than each one individually and that pulls them together as they do their formative work.*

Calvin Seerveld

## ART AND SOUL



### SIGNPOSTS FOR CHRISTIANS IN THE ARTS

HILARY BRAND  
AND  
ADRIENNE CHAPLIN

In some ways the future need not concern us. If we are fully using our gifts as God's stewards, then the wider picture is his problem, not ours. If we are truly doing the work we are called to do – be it the most *avant* of avant-garde or the most unreconstructed traditionalism, the most "in-er-face" shock-art or the lightest of light entertainment – then the world's verdict is of no importance.

However, if we remain entrenched in the Christian ghetto, trailing cautiously a generation behind, or repeating "safe" or saleable formulae, then we need beware. It is the cultural equivalent of "burying our talent," something for which Jesus had the harshest possible words.

And if there are no Christ-believing artistic groundbreakers, then as a Christian community we are not truly doing what God calls us to do. As God's imagebearers, we are called to *form* culture, not simply follow on behind.

#### Launching into the deep

Now here is my secret:

*I tell it to you with an openness of heart that I doubt that I shall ever achieve again, so I pray that you are in a quiet room as you hear these words. My secret is that I need God – that I am sick and can no longer make it alone. I need God to help me give, because I no longer seem capable of giving; to help me be kind, as I no longer seem capable of kindness; to help me love as I seem beyond being*

able to love.

These words were written by the person who defined a generation. Douglas Coupland, author of *Generation X*, has also written of *Life after God*, about the world of privileged suburban children who once used to "float at night in swimming pools the temperature of blood" and now found themselves in "McJobs," cushioned, restless and adrift.

Another writer, Dominic Crossan, has likened the post-modern world to a darkened sea:

*There is no lighthouse keeper. There is no lighthouse. There is no dry land. There are only people living on rafts made from their own imaginations.*

It has become socially acceptable, as we hover between millennia, to admit to spiritual longing. There is no expectation of that longing being met. The church does little to change things, positioning itself on dry land with a loud hailer, occasionally launching rescue missions, but rarely venturing far enough out to actually save anyone.

There is a need for a new kind of Christian mission, one that is willing to travel far out on a fragile craft, one that consents to be vulnerable and fallible, one that understands what it feels like to be adrift, but is still able to describe from experience what it is like to have the rock beneath your feet.

This, then, is the journey of the Christian artist.

*I want to suggest to you that the day of the artists has come. That there are things about symbols and the genuine indirectness of art with integrity that can speak into a lost and stuck imagination.... We are awakening the imagination of people who have become cynical about the old "grand stories" that have done so much harm. We are sowing the possibility that there might be one which could actually set them free.*

Graham Cray

*Excerpted from the book Art and Soul: Signposts for Christians in the Arts, Cumbria, U.K.: Pater-noster (Solway), 1999. Used with permission.*



# The house of the saint: an allegory

Austin Bentreed

**T**his friend of mine lived in a large house, very solidly built, English Tudor, lots of peaks and small windows with leaded panes, some of colored glass. I thought it a little like living in a small cathedral, at least from the outside. But my friend was born and raised out West amid rolling plains, vaulted skies and endless vistas. From the inside, his house was dark, divided into many gloomy rooms with massive walls that shut out all sound. He grew listless, morose, depressed. He withdrew and we all lost contact with him.

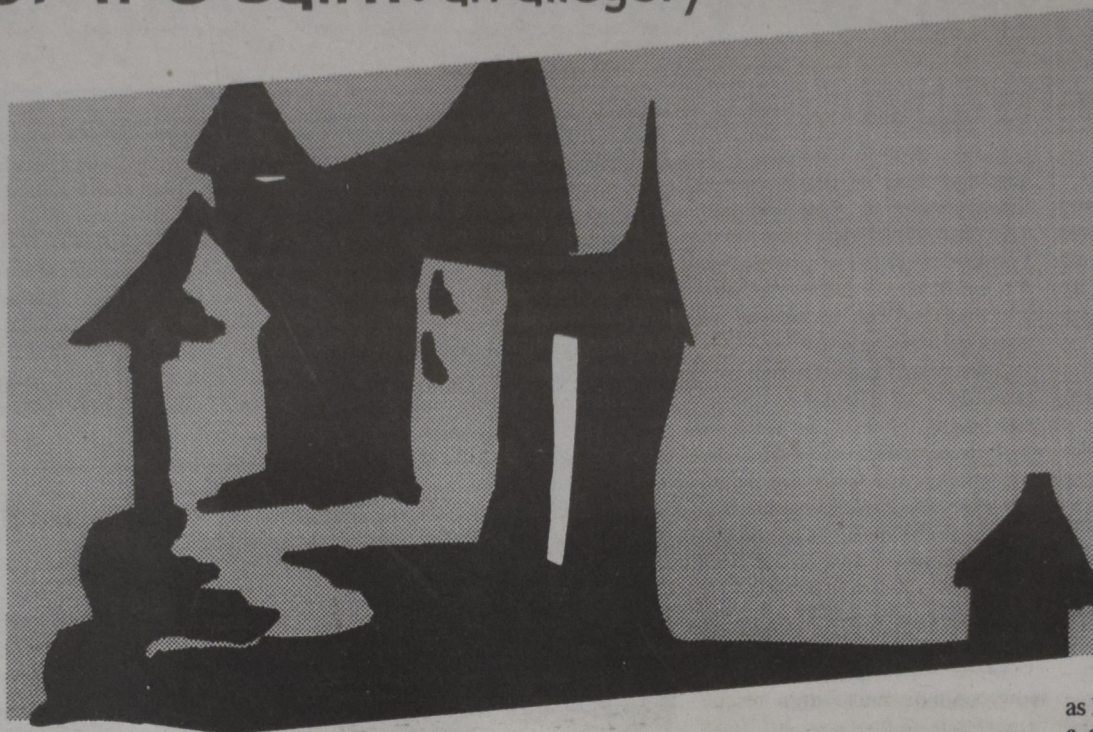
One day, out of the blue, he called me up. "I've had my house remodeled," he said. "I'm excited; no, ecstatic! You must come and help me celebrate. The place is transformed." I went. Reluctantly, I admit.

I had already heard of his folly. How he'd hired a builder of questionable repute, who had completely ruined the style of his stately old home. It was whispered that the builder had plundered the place, tearing out everything of value to sell to collectors. People of the neighborhood had attempted to stop the project and have the house declared a historic site, but without success.

*Oblivious to the embarrassment and reticence of his guests, my friend spoke of further grandiose and grotesque revisions.*

The place had become an object of scandal. The builder had completely violated the Tudor style of the historic house, importing material and structures from greenhouses, theaters, shopping malls, roadside stalls, you name it.

I had listened to the gossip, but had not given it much credence. My friend was, after all, a man of good sense, good taste and culture. But I drove right by the house without recognizing it. He had not exaggerated: the place was transformed beyond recognition. When a transformation occurs in nature,



however, a caterpillar vanishes and a butterfly appears. Here, the caterpillar and the butterfly were yoked together. Along with a couple of other insect species.

I watched as the guests arrived. Each set of arrivals hesitated, as if debating whether to go in or quickly get back into the car. No one drove off, however. It was a strange, strained party. The host was so obviously elated, bustling about, speaking enthusiastically, pointing and gesturing. His friends were overly hearty, but they avoided his eyes and glanced at one another out of the corner of theirs. Most seemed tongue-tied. The host took them to be awestruck. One guest spoke of the sublime in architecture, damning the house with praise.

Oblivious to the embarrassment and reticence of his guests, my friend spoke of further grandiose and grotesque revisions. It was more an amusement park than a home, one woman remarked. You were forever getting turned about. Every time you thought you entered a room, you ended up passing through space that seemed more outside than in. Walls did little or nothing to enclose; they only led you to expect openings. It was impossible to describe their shape, for some rose many feet into the air, while others were so low you could sit on them. Some were stepped, some rose to become arches. Some curved gradually; others protruded only to retreat. They seemed to contain vastly more space than was possible, and yet they didn't contain it; they merely invited it in for a short visit.

It was sleight-of-hand performed with walls and space. And light. Yes, most of the effect came from the channeling, shaping and reflecting of light. It seemed thick as paint in some areas and diaphanous in others. Here it ascended like pillars and there it swirled like fire and smoke. You were aware of the distances this light had travelled before permitting itself to be used like marble here. In one area the light had the quality it has passing through the misty forests of the everglades; in another it had the cold sharpness of mountain air. All that the guests seemed to see, however, was the impossible combination of discordant styles. The place was a monstrosity, a white elephant with stripes.

**Y**ears later I drove by the place by chance. I stopped. It had been turned into a tourist trap. The once splendid formal garden, with its geometry of hedges and flower beds, was now a parking lot. A tall bus was just disgorging a gaggle of white-haired, pot-bellied sightseers. I followed them inside.

Most of the interior had been converted into shops that sold Christmas ornaments year-round. I recalled hearing that the expense of the rebuilding had escalated until my friend had gone bankrupt. A pang of guilt reminded me that I had never looked him up.

With these thoughts in mind, I walked into a bathroom. Imagine my shock, when I nearly bumped into my old friend as I made my way to one of the stalls. He was wearing overalls and was mopping

the floor. He recognized me at once and greeted me with a powerful hug. There wasn't the slightest embarrassment in his demeanor as he showed me around the place.

"I no longer own it, it's true," he said, "but now I enjoy it even more. Most people do not stop here to buy souvenirs, but just to look. Many more can delight in this miraculous play of light. It's unsettling, isn't it, this confusion of inside and outside?"

I looked down from where we stood, on a landing between stairs that led up only to spiral about as if looking for a place to rise to. The

people were strolling from shop to shop, admiring angels, lights that spun and played melodies, stars that pulsed. Few stopped to look up and marvel at the architecture of the building. It was just a souvenir shop.

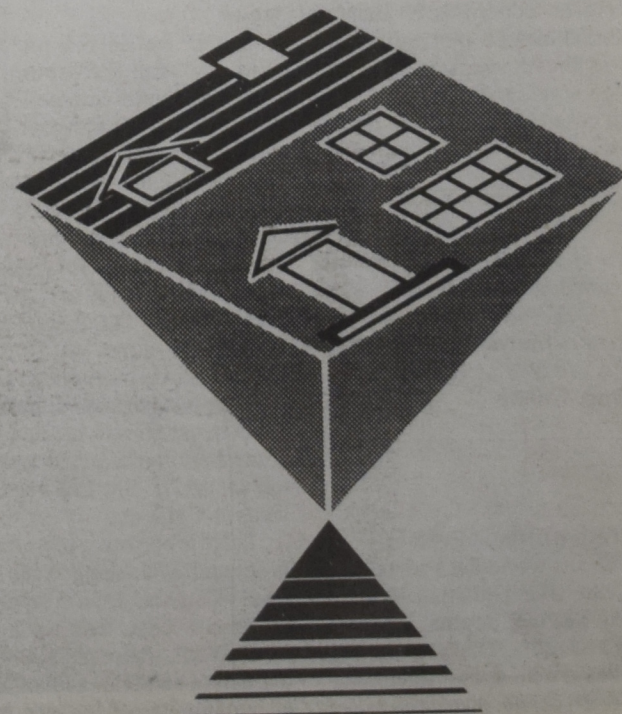
He looked up. "At night it's very peaceful here," he said. "On a clear night it is as if the stars come down to visit you. When I hold my breath, I can hear the music of the constellations as clear and pure

as light playing on water." He took a deep breath and looked almost beatific, like the medieval paintings of dying saints.

It was true, then, what I had heard. The strain of the bankruptcy had driven him mad. Before I left, I slipped him a five dollar bill. He smiled serenely as he took it. "I get a lot of tips," he whispered. Then he stepped closer, gripping my arm. "It's all a matter of architecture. If you build it right, the light pours into the soul and fills it with grace."

I slipped him another five dollar bill, and he let me go.

*Austin Bentreed is a freelance writer whose current whereabouts is unknown.*



**For our Business Directory, please turn to page 21.**



## News

## Academic conference confronts modern Bible-interpreting issues

*The underlying question has become: How can Scripture function as a standard if it gives rise to many different interpretations, none of which can be said to be correct?*

### Harry der Nederlanden

ANCASTER, Ont. — Redeemer College in Ancaster, Ont., hosted its first "Christian Scholarship in the Light of Scripture" conference July 7-10, bringing together scholars from North America, Britain, Europe and Africa to discuss biblical hermeneutics; that is: methods of Bible interpretation.

Papers and discussions centred on how to interpret Scripture, and how such interpretations influence, or ought to influence, the other academic disciplines.

But also discussed was how problems of interpretation pop up in every area of scholarship, including the natural sciences.

It was noted that for many contemporary thinkers, biblical interpretation has come to be seen as a part of philosophy: whenever human beings "make sense of something," they are interpreting, which is what philosophy does. Hermeneutics no longer just focuses on the area of biblical interpretation, but on wherever "meaning" is produced.

It was agreed that this development has posed both profound challenges and new opportunities for Christian scholarship — even unbelieving scholarship, now is inclined to accept the validity of a Christian viewpoint.

### Objectivity rejected

Well over 40 papers and presentations were given during the four-day conference, so no conferee could attend them all. But

if there was one thing on which the conferees were agreed, it was on rejecting "objectivity."

Thirty years ago, conferences on Reformed scholarship would spend time refuting the then common idea that the sciences can be "objective" or "neutral." Reformed scholars always needed to point out that all the sciences require some rootage in faith.

That's no longer true because present scholarship, Christian and other, has come to see that our commitment — whatever it is — influences every kind of knowledge, scientific as well as personal. In fact, the pendulum seems to have swung far in the other direction. Now scholars must often rescue some form of "objectivity" from the glib "relativism" which thinks that "anything goes."

The underlying question has become: How can Scripture function as a standard if it gives rise to many different interpretations, none of which can be said to be correct?

Twenty or 30 years ago, too, Reformed scholars would have been much more confident on many points than they seemed to be at this conference. Then, most were sure that clear answers were forthcoming from a Reformed approach; that such an approach would provide a single, comprehensive view of reality; that all the disciplines would fit into the framework provided by Reformed philosophy.

Much of this is now approached



Left to right: Patrick Heelan, S.J., plenary speaker on "Faith and Reason in the Natural Sciences: A Hermeneutics of John Paul II's Encyclical *Fides et Ratio*," (1998); Willem Ouweneel, plenary speaker on "Postmodern Theological Hermeneutics"; Elma Cornelius, who led a workshop of biblical studies called: "The Power of a 'Sacred Text' — Reading 1 Thessalonians"; and George Lotter, who led a workshop on: "Changing Ethics: The Crisis During Transformation of Society."

more tentatively and humbly. But the passion for a scripturally informed approach to academic work was every bit as deep at this conference as at those in the past. In fact, in some ways contemporary Reformed scholars display greater confidence. The loss of trust in one's own traditions demands a greater trust in the power of God's Word and Spirit to direct us even through diverging traditions. There is now a greater willingness to listen closely to scholars of quite different backgrounds without too quickly resorting to labelling.

For instance Roman Catholic (Jesuit) scholar Patrick Heelan seemed better acquainted with some parts of Reformed history than many Reformed scholars are. And one of the sparkling gems of the conference was a paper on Augustine given by a Mennonite scholar.

### Postmodernism vs. modernism

While scholars working in a given field read each other's papers and books, conferences like this one are important because they allow for personal exchanges between scholars, and there is no substitute for that. It allows positions to be clarified, and gaps of understanding to be bridged.

Academics call the spirit of the age we're in right now postmodern. It is a spirit which is highly subjective: it says that the

only "truth" is yours or mine — there is only our "interpretation" of reality; there is no one "reason" or law or Truth which can put us in contact with reality.

Should Christian scholars condemn or appreciate postmodernism? This has become an issue because of the strong stand Christian thinkers have long taken against what came before it: *modernism*.

Modernism also rejected revelation and transcendence, but it did say that human reason was (is) the one way in which we can reliably get at reality. However, modernism reduced us human beings and the rest of the created world while promoting human autonomy apart from God, rationalism, evolutionism, scientism and revolution.

Postmodernism criticizes modernism on many of the same points as Christians do, but from "inside." It is, therefore, no wonder that many Christians welcome postmodernism as an ally. Many others, most evangelicals perhaps, condemn it as a route to relativism (all values are relative) and nihilism (there is no ultimate meaning in the universe). Often postmodernism seems to undermine not only modernism and rationalism, but all positions that espouse some ultimate, normative order.

Twenty and 30 years ago, many students and professors (and ordinary Christians) found Reformed philosophy attractive because of its dream of a "pure" approach. It

held out the promise of being Christian from the ground up. But it is no longer possible to dream of doing Christian scholarship that is not adulterated by non-Christian thinking.

### Repeated call to repentance

Perfection and purity here, as in life, are not achievements but end-time realities. By being at the end, with God, they are also at the beginning, for he is our Beginning as well as our End: a mystery that shatters our normal concepts.

"Purity" is part of the biblical call to faithfulness and integrity. This calling is still the central pursuit of conferences like this one, and is part of the Reformed tradition. God's Kingdom, Reformed people we say, lays claim to every square inch and every moment of creaturely existence.

But the Reformed tradition is at heart a repeated call to conversion, as well.

The mind and the world of scholarship also need to be called again and again to examine themselves in the light of God's Word. We can be grateful that we do not lack for scholars who respond to that call, heart, soul and mind.

Harry der Nederlanden has done doctoral studies in literature at the State University of New York at Buffalo. He is a member of CC's editorial advisory committee and lives in St. Catharines, Ontario.



Dr. Elaine Botha, academic vice-president of Redeemer College, with a conference attendee.



## Education

## 36-year principal retires from B.C. Christian school

Marian Van Til, with files from Curt Gesch

SMITHERS, B.C. — After more than four decades as an educator in both Christian and public schools, Glenn Ewald of Smithers, B.C. retired in June at the end of the school year. Ewald ended his career at Smithers Christian School, where he was principal for 36 years. His career began in Ontario, where he completed his "normal school" training and then taught at five different schools, including six years as a Grade 7 teacher in the public system. After that he moved to the then almost new Smithers Christian School.

Those who know him call Ewald a "people person," and believe that that was his major strength as a teacher and principal. Ewald admits that he enjoyed working with and trying to help students others considered "bad boys."

### Inspired by a speech

Ewald became convinced of the need for Christian education after hearing a speech by Rev. Bassam Madany, long-time Arabic-language broadcaster for the Christian Reformed Church's "Back to God Hour." After that speech, Ewald's commitment never wavered.

Ewald recently looked at a paper he wrote many years ago as an educational creed. It asked five questions about who we are as human beings, our purpose on this earth, who God is, how God speaks to us, and how we should respond to him.

Says Ewald, "Answering these types of questions was all the rage [at one time, in Reformed educational circles]. But answering these questions is still what Christian education is all about, the foundation of everything we do."



Now retired principal Glenn Ewald warms up a winter scene with a handful of his school's students.

## Christian centre's textbooks used by British school system

### Former ICS student helps make it happen

Harry der Nederlanden

ANCASTER, Ont. — David Smith, one of the scholars attending the hermeneutics conference, came as a representative of an organization none of us has probably heard of: the Stapleford Centre. Some of us may have heard of David Smith himself, though. A few years ago he was studying philosophy at the Institute for Christian Studies (ICS) in Toronto. He is now a researcher at the Stapleford Centre.

The centre is a Christian organization that began every bit as small as the ICS did. It produces materials for spiritual and moral education, sponsors conferences and helps train teachers. Last year it won a prize for one of its textbooks, *Jesus through Art*. At present it has placed an average of five textbooks in every school in Eng-

land. How did it come to be so influential in such a short time?

"It was just a matter of being in the right spot at the right time," says David Smith. "It was providential." The state schools in England have a Christian past, as do the schools in Canada. Although they are Christian no longer, the recently rewritten constitution of the schools in the U.K. calls for a component of spiritual and moral development all across the curriculum. The Stapleford Centre was one of the few organizations who had been doing work in this area, and their materials were quickly recognized as of exceptional quality. In a few years the centre has grown to 10 staff and about 30 teachers working on curriculum development. It is exerting a tremendous influence on schools all across the U.K.

David Smith has co-authored a book with Barbara Carvill of Calvin College on the relation between a Christian view of the person, spiritual development and

foreign language education, to be published in the near future. He is also providing guidance for students pursuing a masters in education in Australia, largely over the

Internet. So he is not only a very cosmopolitan person but a virtual one as well. You may visit the Stapleford Centre at: [www.stapleford-centre.org](http://www.stapleford-centre.org).

## Bible used in six ways in Christian schools, says British scholar

Harry der Nederlanden

ANCASTER, Ont. — The conference on Christian scholarship held at Redeemer College, July 7-10, provided an opportunity for David Smith of the Stapleford Centre in Nottingham, England, to present an overview of some of the research done by him and his colleagues. The research focused on how the Bible is actually used in educational materials produced by a wide array of Christian organizations and publishers.

Smith and his colleagues have sorted the approaches they've come across into six categories. The status of these categories is far from fixed — some may be broader than others and actually include one or more of the others. Some conference participants challenged some of the categories, but were agreed that the analysis was fruitful. The Bible enters into the school:

1) as subject matter, either as a

direct object of study or incidentally;

2) as a shaping influence on the character of the teacher conveyed to students by modelling;

3) as a body of educational ideas and implications drawn from biblical teachings;

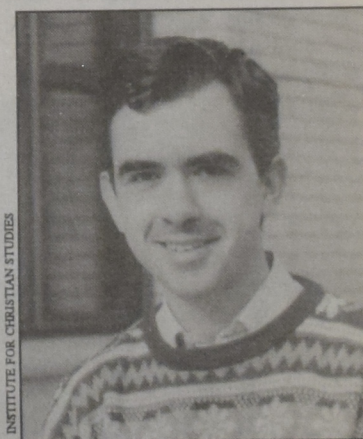
4) as a narrative that places the Christian community in the context of the biblical story;

5) as a source of productive guiding metaphors;

6) as modelled by different parts of the biblical canon, i.e., by the community's use of tradition in the Pentateuch, by the traditions of the Torah (law), by the reforming call of the prophets, and by the experience of the wisdom books.

### Worldview approach basic

Each approach focuses the teacher's attention in different ways. The conference discussion raised the possibility that one way — perhaps the worldview approach — might be taken as basic, and might be able to encompass many

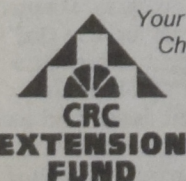


David Smith

of the others.

Smith invited suggestions for approaches his team may have missed. It was suggested during the discussion period that teachers may use several of these approaches unconsciously, but that being aware of more models enables them to develop their approaches more deliberately.

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## Education

## Christian ministries link to reach students

### Gospel CD look-alike designed for youth-oriented culture



Partners in "Breakthrough: The Gospel Of John" hold the CD-shaped booklet to be distributed in Canada's high schools and universities this year. Back, l.-r.: Ross Rains, national director of the Navigators of Canada; Greg Bailey, national director, Canadian Bible Society; James Berney, general director, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. Front, l.-r.: Lindsay Doyle and Debbie Hewitt, students with IVCF at McMaster University; Navin Singh, IVCF staff worker at McMaster.

#### Bruce H. Allen

TORONTO (Canadian Bible Society) – Three major Christian ministries are joining forces to put "Breakthrough: The Gospel of John" into the hands of thousands of university and high schools students across Canada over the next year. Leaders of the Canadian Bible Society, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship of Canada, and the Navigators of Canada agreed to the partnership at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ont., on June 15.

Under the agreement the Canadian Bible Society will publish 50,000 copies of "Breakthrough"

in a graphically appealing, CD-shaped format. Young Canadians involved with InterVarsity and the Navigators will then personally distribute the publication to their friends on campuses and in high schools.

#### Equipping students to share their faith

"Our goal is to equip Christian students across the country to share their faith authentically from life, and effectively from Scripture," says Ross Rains, national director of the Navigators. "The 'Breakthrough' booklet is simply

excellent and will help us accomplish that goal."

Jim Berney, general director of InterVarsity, asks Christians to pray for the project. "There is a lot of hunger out there for spiritual things," says Berney. "The challenge for Christian students is to connect the Good News of Jesus Christ with that hunger. That's where 'Breakthrough' comes in."

The Bible society's Greg Bailey is convinced that young people are awakening to their need for the gospel. Says Bailey, "Tragic events like the ones in Littleton, Colorado, and Tabor, Alberta, compel us to reach out – and what better way than students giving students the Word of God."

#### Effective in the U.K.

The publication has already proven popular among youth in the U.K. Leaders of the three Christian groups involved in the Canadian project are encouraged by that success. They are confident that Christian students in Canada will be able to share their faith more effectively by using "Breakthrough's" contemporary format to present the Old, Old Story.

Bailey, Berney and Rains point out that working in partnership will yield results which would be difficult for any ministry to accomplish alone. "We believe our supporters want us to reach young people in high schools and universities in a meaningful way. Working together makes that a reality," say the leaders. "Thousands and thousands of students will be impacted because of the combined effort."

## Zambian students learn to handle conflict via one-of-a-kind program

#### Charmayne Denligner Brubaker

MINDOLO, Zambia (MCC) – The Peace Building and Conflict Transformation courses offered here in northern Zambia are one of a kind in Africa. And the lessons students learn from Jan Schmidt, a Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) worker, who teaches in the program, promise to transform relationships in families, communities and church agencies.

Schmidt teaches five different ways to handle conflict: negotiation, conciliation, mediation, arbitration and litigation. Students also learn about various levels of

conflict and varied ways people react to conflict.

Schmidt also asks students to recall three proverbs about peace and conflict and to identify what those proverbs teach about those subjects. "The students enjoy the course and I learn from them when we talk about how conflict is handled in their cultures and communities."

#### Lessons effective

The lessons already seem to be sinking in, as Schmidt's students have cited good results when trying to put into practice what they've learned. The students, ages

26 to 45, usually come with scholarships and are sponsored by the church agencies for which they work.

The Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation is launching a three-month Building and Conflict Transformation program this month, and will launch a nine-month program in February 2000. If there are other "conflict" programs in Africa they aren't more than two-weeks long. Schmidt asserts that "we really need nine months to change the way students think about conflict."

## Campus Culture



Peter Schuurman

## Dancing with the devil

A United Church friend shared one of the hymns from her hymnbook with me. The first verse went like this:

*I was there to hear your borning cry, I'll be there when you are old.*

*I rejoiced the day you were baptized, to see your life unfold.*

*I was there when you were but a child, with a faith to suit you well, In a blaze of light you wandered off to find where demons dwell.*

I recognize that the term "demons" can be used to refer to a number of things, but I thought of them in my context as representative of some of the temptations we face on campus. Like Christ as he faced the devil in the wilderness at the beginning of his ministry.

It is no secret that when many young people leave home to go to university they do some testing, and I don't mean taking academic tests (Christians are not exempt). Suddenly free of parental and church authority and guidance, they fall in with mainstream student culture, which is typically a culture of learning, experimentation, and pushing the limits.

Take drinking for example. I got some statistics out of an American book called *The Abandoned Generation*. The authors cite some national averages: 47.5 per cent of students under 21 admit to binge drinking once every two weeks, and 33 per cent say they binge at least every week. For some, it's just a stage they go through. For others, it becomes a lifestyle, and then a serious debilitating problem.

Sexual promiscuity is another oft-mentioned temptation. Then, of course, there is drug use on campus, too. Or – and don't laugh, it's a serious crime – plagiarism, when one steals others' scholarship. It seems the university years – that often uncertain period between life with one's family of origin and life in the working world – can really be a dance with the devil.

#### Know, then resist

It's dangerous to dance with the devil. You are almost sure to stumble in some way. But maybe it's an important confrontation to make when you're young. To flirt with him, test him and look him in the eyes with Christ-like confidence. The scary thing is, you're bound to see part of yourself reflected in his eyes. And then you know: life is a struggle, a struggle against forces you can't just play with, dance with. A struggle that most profoundly goes on inside of you every day, in numerous ways.

Some students never look the devil in the eye and never learn about their own "demons." And as long as you don't know your own demons, you cannot resist them. You might even start to think you don't have any, and that's the most pernicious deceit of all. More subtle temptations like careerism, intellectualism and spiritual dualism become idols that obscure the call to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God. Immoral behavior may drag you down, but in the lofty clouds of spiritual pride you can lose your soul.

I watch, listen, and even plead with some students as they progress through their university career. And I wonder whether this dance will end in an embrace, resistance, or most positively, transformation. God only knows.

Peter Schuurman is the Christian Reformed campus chaplain at Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario.



## Comment

*What do we have in common after 50 years?**Dear Mary,*

For two weeks we had guests from the Netherlands – my younger brother and his wife. And a month later we were visited for five days by an old school/church/soccer friend and his wife. Lots of driving of course: Niagara Falls, southern Ontario, our old dwelling places. Too much food and fine Ontario white wine. And many hours of sitting around, hanging out, talking, talking, talking.

What did we talk about? There was no shortage of topics. We've had lots of contact over the years with my brother and sister-in-law. They know our church community, and we know theirs. We share bonds with two other brothers and their families, and with our elderly mother. We share lots of family memories, sad ones, happy ones, tense ones (World War II-era).

We bantered about personal and family history, the way we raised our kids and what has happened to them, the wonders and worries of marriage, the things that shaped the church of our youth and what had to change in all that, the soccer games we played as members of the same team.

**But with that old friend of mine, previous contact has been very limited:** just one day together as their guests in Holland three years ago; an additional afternoon of talk on some Dutch patio; and perhaps three one-hour meetings before that. Maybe 15 hours face-to-face since 1954, plus maybe five letters each in the past 10 years, and a couple of brief phone calls.

So about what did we talk? Well, there was no shortage of topics here, either. We shared personal and family history, the way we raised our kids and what has happened to them, the wonders and worries of marriage, the things that shaped the church of our youth and what had to change in all that, the soccer games we played as members of the same team. Oh yes, and the miles we biked to and from school.

Of course the details of the conversations were different, but not their thrusts, contours and weights. For both sets of conversations so vividly demonstrated this: the shape of who we are is set very early in life. We're 50 years older, and we're still what we were then. The same basic interests, the same basic outlooks on life.

**Family was and is important. Faith was and is important.** Career was and is important, if not for working now (we're all retired), for the identity it gave us adults. Our adult children now have their own families, careers and lives. We agreed: they all have **very different sorts of lives than we** lived. Would we want them to be like us? In no wise. Do we regret the way we've lived our lives? Not really.

You know what we also agreed on? That 50 years ago we could not have had the kinds of conversations we had now. Basically none of us was taught how to express feelings, show vulnerability, agree on ambivalence, rue failings, admit profound ignorance. Life had to teach us that, and we shared our joy that knowledgeable people along our ways have helped us, some in person, most through books and other writings.

One more thing: we read the Bible and some devotional materials together and prayed together. And then talked about that. We encountered moments of profound fellowship. We realized that in the end, our identity was less job than faith, less carved out than provided, less individual than communal.

And we praised God for our lives lived among God's people. And in the end we realized that in that lies the essential reason for being able to talk this much, this familiarly, even though we have lived an ocean apart for almost 50 years.

*Love,  
Adrian*

*Dear Adrian,*

I really like your last paragraph about discovering the essential basis of your identity. It seems to me that that statement shows the kind of maturity that people in our stage of life ought to have. It seems so different from the frantic searches to "find out who I am" or to find companionship or community in more or less transient groups. Probably you and I have done some of that. I know I have. It's a necessary stage to go through. But, like pregnancy, it's a good stage to be finished with.

**It's hard to convey to younger generations** that it really is good to get old. It's good to be, and to feel rooted and settled, in the major questions of life. There are many things I don't need to question or to think about any more, except when doing the kind of reminiscing you've had the gift of doing with your brother and your friend.

The risk of being settled, of course, is that we simply close the windows and doors and pull the shades down. The fact that I feel settled in who I am, whose I am, and with whom I belong doesn't mean that I no longer have questions. One of the worst things I can imagine for myself is that I become totally self-satisfied, feeling that there is no more need or room for growth.

But unless the Lord has some great surprise in store for me, I don't envision my growth as being a revolution or a complete turning around from where I am. I expect it will be further building on the solid foundation of the life I've lived so far.

**Your mention of a "communal identity"** is interesting. I've recently been reading in a book entitled *Why I Am A Mennonite*. Change the names and the ethnic origin of many of the writers and you would have a book called *Why I Am Christian Reformed*.

Most of the writers grew up in the church, as we did, for the most part unquestioning in the early years. Then came a period of struggle, intense questioning of both the faith and the church, sometimes to the point of rebellion.

One way or another, these writers, though they may still disagree with some of the positions and practices of their church, have, if not resolved their conflict, at least learned to live with a certain amount of tension in their relationship with their church. Some internal force in the end compels them to say "I am a Mennonite."

**You and I have both had our struggles** with the Christian Reformed Church, sometimes bitter ones. I still occasionally cast an envious eye at the Anglicans, and I have valued enormously the spiritual direction I've received from Catholics.

But when all is said and done, I have to admit that my communal identity lies primarily with Dutch people who hold a Reformed world-and-life view. Is that ethnicity? Providence? Doctrine? Family? History? Experience? Grace? Probably all of those together.

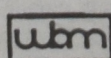
But whatever its faults, and whatever pain it has caused, in the end I am thankful that I had a heritage strong enough to grow up with, to fight with, and finally to come to terms with.

*Mary*

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*Adrian Peetoom is a retired educational editor who lives in Waterloo, Ont. Mary Vander Vennen is a retired therapist who lives in Toronto.*



## Agriculture/Business Directory

## Gas pipeline nonsense

Just a mile from our farm a dubious 48-inch diameter gas pipeline project is being staked out. Snaking 3,750 km between Fort St. John, B.C., and Chicago, it is planned to funnel a huge amount of non-renewable and fast-depleting resource into the maw of the world's second-most consumptive nation.

### Why are we so gullibly and blandly accepting robbery right from under our noses?

Does that make sense? It did to our federal and provincial governments, who quickly gave approval through environment ministers who seem to be the front people for government support of any large assault on creation.

Alliance Pipelines, which is building the line, also is advertising environmental concern, purporting to be doing all it can to not disturb forest, fish or field. Admirable as that might be, there

will nevertheless be a sizeable invasion of the ecology of three provinces and four states. Pipelines constructed years ago, like varicose veins spread out across the continent, still mar the landscape.

### Compromise, ignorance, apathy

According to Alliance, even environmentalists are happy with their project, and landowners also have virtually all made agreements to allow the line through. Compromise, ignorance and apathy must all be playing a part in this highly questionable project. I wonder about the enthusiasm of my neighbor, who himself is in the pipeline business, when this line is being installed almost spitting distance from his new house.

Though the long-term effects of surface disturbance are serious enough, the drain on Alberta's and Canada's finite supply of natural gas is a more serious problem few are raising. Actually, some large petrochemical companies are not happy with "feedstock" moving out of the area because they have

established large plants here to produce plastics and other products from natural gas. And pipeline companies with transcontinental lines already installed question the need for another line, especially such a big one.

Speaking of resource depletion, 3,200,000 tons of steel will be entombed in the ground for Alliance's pipeline. The equivalent in steel would supply the rails for four trans-Canada railroads. And I am saving tins for recycling?

Why are we so gullibly and blandly accepting robbery right from under our noses? The governments and the companies crow, "Jobs, jobs, jobs," though construction jobs will be short-term. After that only a few will be employed to keep the pipeline working, and even that will be relatively short-lived, given the hurry to sell off our natural gas.

Money from drilling rights and gas production royalties will pour into government coffers, keeping Alberta tax rates down for perhaps a generation, and that will keep people happy.

But what about affordable fuel

supplies for our children and their children? A noted geologist has predicted that the world will be almost out of oil (and gas?) by 2100. Some of my grandchildren could still be living at that time.

### We're all implicated

How did we allow this to happen? Big business and big government are making a big mistake, but we are all implicated. Some day we will all feel the bite of that 3,750 km snake. In fact, we already are. In the last week, our gas supply company announced a need to hike the price of gas 26 per cent this summer, and a warning of another jump in rates for winter because they must keep up with the price of raw gas. Since 50 per cent of Alberta's gas is being sold to the U.S., Alberta has forced itself to

keep up with market prices there.

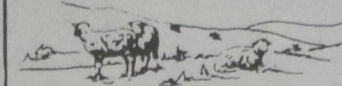
Supposing we must suddenly face up to the fact that very little more gas can be found, and we may already be seeing signs of that: some oil companies are complaining that in some areas so much gas has been removed that there is not enough pressure anymore to push the oil to the surface.

We could just shut down the transcontinental pipelines. Could we? Given international trade laws, any area with a historical dependence on an imported commodity necessary to life has the right to it. Thus, we'll have to share our gas with Chicago, whether we can afford to or not.

*Vern Gleddie owns a sheep ranch outside Edmonton, Alberta.*

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## Nose for News



Bert Hielema

**MID JULY WE SPENT** in the Netherlands to attend the funeral of a relative. There I discovered something which warmed my heart and moistened my eyes: the first choice recipient of donated surplus flowers given at funerals is Canadian war graves. After liberating the Netherlands more than 50 years ago Canadians still occupy an important place in the Dutch collective memory.

Not directly related to this, but yet a bit in line is a little item I found in *Trouw*, a Christian daily and a very good one, too. I translate: "ROME: The influential Italian Jesuit Magazine *Civiltà Cattolica* has surprisingly stated: 'There is no fire in hell.' Eternal damnation is, according to this journal, no physical place with horrifying high temperatures, but a condition of life-without-God.

"God does not condemn people to hellish punishment, but human beings convict themselves by their own free will," says this semi-monthly paper. "Hell is a human situation, a mode of existence of a person who suffers from the pain of a life without God. The tragic truth is that people themselves make their own hell."

A recent investigation reveals that only 10 to 20 per cent of all Italians believe in literal hellfire. The Jesuit journal complains that while in earlier times believers were unjustifiedly threatened with

hellish torment now almost nobody seems to care anymore. I guess the same applies to heaven.

**TROUW ALWAYS** carries a wide variety of articles. It recently devoted an enlightening page to the question of abortion and euthanasia. Dr. Frits de Lange, a Christian ethics professor, started an article as follows: "Is life holy? Yes, say believing opponents of abortion and euthanasia: life is divine, that's why people may not touch it. The Pope, especially, says so emphatically in his *Evangelium Vitae*: 'Human life is holy and inviolate at each moment of its existence, from its earliest conception till the end.'"

Prof. de Lange comments that there is something startling going on with this holiness of life. Now that people who call themselves Christians are increasingly abandoning the hope of life after death, they cling to life before death. However, the idea that human life is divine and holy does not originate in Christian thinking, but in Stoicism, a Greek philosophy proclaiming that every human harbors a divine spark.

Among others, de Lange quoted a French thinker who says about the present Pope: "John Paul II talks as an Abraham who under no circumstances ever would sacrifice his son, even if God Himself would order him to." Writes Dr.

de Lange: "Only the Creator himself is holy, his creation is not. The Bible calls it idolatry when a part of natural life is elevated to god. Between Creator and creation there remains a strong tie, but this is no more than natural. This tie is based on the covenant promise of a God who sees humans as his partners...."

"Christians believe in a God who, in becoming human, has 'made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant' (Phil. 2:7). A God who became human is a God who comes to us more as a dilemma than as an authority, more as a question than as an answer.

"...Life is at our disposal and is our responsibility. In what we do with life we either give the Giver pleasure or pain. But we are always accountable, which places us often for difficult dilemmas." The full text may be found on the World Wide Web at [www.trouw.nl](http://www.trouw.nl)

My comment: Life is and always must be a struggle, often challenging and sometimes even delightful. This challenge continues into eternity, and it makes us human. To stop investigating and to stop questioning and to stop changing our minds, means to cease being human. It seems to me that in that regard the church is often more a hindrance than a help in our quest for redemption.

**HERE IS SOMETHING** else from *Trouw*. It informed readers of a special web page for parents ([www.ouders.nl](http://www.ouders.nl)) where parents exchange their experiences and ask advice. In a half-page article under the heading EDUCATION, a reporter highlights some recent discussions. Here are some excerpts, again in translation: "Readers are wondering why the boys' organ of urination has a specific name, which for these little fellows is [in Dutch, of course] called 'plassertje' (plas = puddle) or 'piemeltje' (pie = pee). [The ending 'tje' indicates 'small', thus the words mean: 'small puddle-maker' and 'small pee-er.'] Both words are used freely, while there simply is no equivalent word for little girls."

A number of parents wonder why this is so, and offer

suggestions. After far-ranging probing, trying out many different names, a consensus emerges to call it "piemelien." So if you visit Holland in the future and encounter such a discussion – who knows nowadays where conversations go! – at least you'll be able to participate intelligently.

**SEVERAL PAPERS** in the Netherlands reported on a particular event in Malawi, a country I went to a few years ago to visit the Presbyterian Mission station in Blantyre. A Dutchman there not only became a member of parliament, but even the assistant minister of finance. In an interview, asked what he sees as his priority, Jan-Jaap Sonke said: "Collecting taxes."

In that ultra-poor country, 95 per cent of the people live off their little garden plots and from barter. This makes collecting taxes in this non-monetary economy difficult. The 53-year-old Sonke has lived in Malawi for 24 years and has been a jack of all trades: development worker, architect, dealer in solar panels – and has gone broke a number of times, which he blamed on poor economic conditions, while others say that he has poor financial judgment (if all else fails, become a politician).

Sonke thinks that tobacco is Malawi's gold. (Gold is now trading at an almost all-time low.) The oh-so-green (i.e., inexperienced) assistant minister claims that, since to grow tobacco in Malawi only costs four cents per package, there are fortunes to be made on that product. Well, dirt-poor Malawi already has one of the highest HIV/AIDS infection rate in the world. Combine that with cigarette smoking and soon they will have the highest lung cancer rate as well, making it even more difficult to collect taxes.

**ON TOBACCO:** As if there weren't enough reasons to quit, a new study links smoking during pregnancy to serious behavioral problems in children. Boys under 14 whose mothers smoked are four times as likely to steal, set fires, lie or exhibit other aggressive behavior. Adolescent daughters of smoking mothers are five times as

likely to abuse drugs. One theory is that nicotine may affect the developing brain.

**A RECENT ISSUE OF** *Time* brings some old news to CC readers: what's good for you and what's bad has changed over the years. With a rating expressed in red hearts instead of stars, the experts now say: butter and stick margarine rate only one heart, while Benecol rates three – thus three times as good for your ticker. Skim milk is given four hearts, compared to one for whole milk, and a black heart for ice cream. Salt has been restored to two hearts. Romaine lettuce to four, with iceberg rating only one. Cereals earn a three rating, the same as tea, while coffee gets a one. Onions and garlic having flavonoids and polyphenols which protect the heart get a three rating, the same as peanut butter. Spinach, broccoli, carrots, tomatoes all score high, and so do buffalo meat and venison, and lean pork chops. So there is your diet if you value your heart.

**A FINAL THOUGHT** that should cheer us all up: In Germany, a women's magazine called *Freundin* (female friends) reports that sex will not only make you healthier, happier and wiser, but it can also help prevent headaches, so the old excuse of avoiding sex because of a headache is no longer valid. Scientists have found that regular sex produces hormones that stimulate the brain and endorphins that help eliminate migraines. Said professor Dr. Werner Habermehl: "Sex promotes our ability to concentrate, lengthens our attention span, and stimulates creativity."

An item I read somewhere: If you want to create a boy, a study of 288 schoolchildren and 141 mothers in Jamaica revealed that women with the thickest waists have about 50 per cent more sons than do women in general. Thus "tubular" women tend to produce a higher proportion of sons.

*Bert and Diny Hielema have three daughters and two sons and an even spread of grandchildren: five of each. They live in Tweed, Ont. None of their children, nor they themselves, are "tubular."*

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## Classifieds

Classified Rates	Anniversaries	Birthdays	Anniversary															
<p><b>As of May 1999:</b> Note: 7% GST will be added to all prices listed below.</p> <p><b>DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION</b> <i>Christian Courier</i> is published on alternate Mondays. Copy deadline for each issue is 8:30 a.m. Wednesday, eight business days prior to publication.</p> <p><b>RATES</b> The cost of advertising space is <b>\$14.00 per column inch (pci) of length.</b> (All columns are 2 inches wide.) This rate applies to all personal and family announcements as well as all other types of advertising, including multi-column display ads. Clients will be invoiced after publication.</p> <p><b>PHOTOS</b> There is a processing fee of \$25 for the inclusion of a photograph with a personal or family announcement. Photo space is not charged pci, but we reserve the right to determine published photo size. Please note that we cannot use a faxed photo. We need either an original (which we will return) or a downloadable internet image.</p> <p><b>PERSONAL ADS</b> <i>Christian Courier</i> would be pleased to handle your personal ad in an efficient and discreet manner. The cost to set up a personal file under a unique file number is \$35. Ads requesting correspondence with this file are run at \$15 per insertion. All correspondence is immediately forwarded unopened.</p> <p><b>NEWLYWEDS &amp; NEW PARENTS</b> We offer a \$25 one-year subscription to couples whose wedding is announced in <i>Christian Courier</i> AND to parents who announce the birth of a child in our paper. Please let us know when placing your ad that you want to take advantage of this offer.</p> <p><b>SUBMITTING YOUR AD</b> mail: <i>Christian Courier</i> #4 - 261 Martindale Road St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1 fax: 905-682-8313 email: ccadpromo@aol.com</p> <p><b>OTHER INFORMATION</b> a) <i>Christian Courier</i> reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format. b) Please provide us with clear copy. <i>Christian Courier</i> is not responsible for any errors due to hand written or phoned-in advertisements.</p>	<div></div> <p><i>Congratulations to Harry &amp; Anne Voortman on their 40th wedding anniversary.</i></p> <table><tr><td>Hamilton Ont.</td><td>Burlington Ont.</td></tr><tr><td>1959</td><td>July 24</td></tr><tr><td>1999</td><td></td></tr></table> <p>Congratulations to <b>HARRY &amp; ANNE VOORTMAN</b> (nee VANDER WAL) on the occasion of their 40<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary! May the Lord bless you with many more happy years together. With love from your children and grandchildren.</p> <table><tr><td>1964</td><td>August 8</td><td>1999</td></tr></table> <p>With great joy and celebration, your children and grandchildren wish you, <b>MARC &amp; DOROTHY</b> <b>STROOBOSSCHER</b> (nee VAN MARRUM), a blessed Anniversary. The wedding text you chose 35 years ago has been the theme of your married life together; it has been an inspiration to us all. "For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even to the end." (Psalm 48:14) With much love, Rick &amp; Della Thalia, Kristin, Nathaniel Chris &amp; Heather Zoë Duane &amp; Tracy Taylor, Jordyn Marcella Pete Home Address: Box 453, 13 Brooks Circle, Smithville, ON L0R 2A0</p> <div><p><b>St. Catharines</b>      <b>Hamilton</b> Ont.      Ont.</p><table><tr><td>1949</td><td>August 21</td><td>1999</td></tr></table><p>With praise and thanksgiving to God, we announce the 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents <b>HERB &amp; MARY GROENEWEGEN</b> (nee BATENBERG) They were the first couple married in the Maranatha CRC in St. Catharines. Rev. A. Persenaire officiated at the wedding. We pray that the Lord will bless and keep you in his care. With love: Nell &amp; John Jansen - Maple, Ont. Cheryl &amp; Doug, Ken, Janice, Patricia Harry &amp; Jeanette Groenewegen - Hamilton, Ont. Erin, Sandi, Tim, Lindsey Betty &amp; George DeBoer - Smithville, Ont. Kevin, Lindsay, Travis Annette &amp; Don Clarke - Elora, Ont. Sean, Courtenay, Ashley Neil &amp; Kelly Groenewegen - Hamilton, Ont. Emily, Rachel To celebrate God's goodness, the children are hosting an open house on Saturday, August 21, 1999, at the Immanuel CRC in Hamilton, Ont. (Corner of Mohawk Rd. &amp; West 5<sup>th</sup> St.) from 2-4 p.m. Everyone is welcome. Best wishes only, please. Home address: 257 West 18<sup>th</sup> Street, Hamilton, ON L9C 4H1</p></div> <div><p><b>90<sup>th</sup> BIRTHDAY</b> <b>GERDA VAN</b> <b>VELDHUISEN-VANDAM</b> born in Voorthuizen, the Netherlands, will be celebrating her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday on Aug. 21<sup>st</sup>, 1999. If you know her, give her a call or write her a note. She now resides at 36 42<sup>nd</sup> St., Whitehouse Station, N.J. 08889, USA. Her telephone number is 908-534-4882. She still lives alone, drives a car, enjoys ballroom-, line- and square-dancing weekly and is a caregiver to her friends and neighbors. Her children, Bill, George, Dick and Willie, their partners, her 11 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren thank God for her positive attitude, her health, her faith in God and being a great friend to all of us. We wish her God's continual blessing in her years to come.</p></div>	Hamilton Ont.	Burlington Ont.	1959	July 24	1999		1964	August 8	1999	1949	August 21	1999	<div></div> <p>With great joy and gratitude to the Lord, we celebrated on July 29, 1999, the 95th birthday of our mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and great-great-grandmother, <b>LUTINA RUMPH</b> (nee KWANT) Her grateful children: Henry &amp; Lammie Rumph-Steenbergen - Smithville, Ont. Arnold &amp; Ann Marie Rumph-VanHelden - St. Petersburg, Fla. Hilbert &amp; Dinie Rumph-Drost - Drayton, Ont. Jake &amp; Teresa Rumph-Van Minnen - Rexdale, Ont. Hilda &amp; John Steenbergen - Drayton, Ont. Alice &amp; Ralph Van Dyke - Kitchener, Ont. Albert &amp; Ann Rumph-Drost - Thornbury, Ont. Correspondence address: Box 377, Smithville, ON L0R 2A0</p>	<table><tr><td>1959</td><td>August 8</td><td>1999</td></tr></table> <p>Brampton, Ont. Richmond, B.C. "For no other foundation can anyone lay, than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Cor 3:11) With joy and thankfulness to God, we announce the 40th wedding anniversary of our parents, Opa and Oma, <b>HANK &amp; DINI OLDEJANS</b> (nee KALSBECK) Congratulations, Mom and Dad. May the Lord continue to bless you and keep you in his care. Merlin Oldejans - Vancouver Grace &amp; Bernie Hensel - Vancouver Robyn, Lauren Home Address: 5220 Lancing Road, Richmond, BC V7C 3A1</p>	1959	August 8	1999
Hamilton Ont.	Burlington Ont.																	
1959	July 24																	
1999																		
1964	August 8	1999																
1949	August 21	1999																
1959	August 8	1999																
		<p><b>Obituaries</b></p> <table><tr><td>Friesland the Neth.</td><td>Grimsby Ont.</td></tr></table> <p>Oct. 2, 1915 - July 19, 1999 "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6a) <b>GEERTJE SIETSMADIJKSTRA</b> Peacefully into the arms of Jesus and now free from all suffering and pain. Dear wife of Heine Sietsma for 56 years. Loving mother, grandmother and great-grandmother of: Lucy &amp; Jan Visscher - St. Catharines Laura &amp; Jim Huurman (Ryan, Marisa, Sarah) Michael &amp; Sandra Wiersma (Katlyn, Sierra) Cheryl &amp; Albert Wimmers (Benjamin, Madison, Robyn, Adriana) Paula Wiersma Gerry &amp; John Weenink - Stroud Sandra &amp; Darcy Mullan Stephanie &amp; James (boyfriend) Stephen &amp; Charlotte (fiancee) Marijke &amp; Andy Van Driel - Fenwick David, Tim, Scott, Rosemary A sister, Bootje, in the Netherlands. Pastor Rich deLange preached at the funeral service on Isaiah 40:25-31 where we learn to wait upon the Lord and He will renew our strength. Our comfort is that Mom is now safe in the arms of Jesus! Correspondence address: Mr. H. Sietsma, Shalom Manor, 12 Bartlett Ave., Grimsby, ON L3M 4N5</p>	Friesland the Neth.	Grimsby Ont.														
Friesland the Neth.	Grimsby Ont.																	
		<p><b>Job Opportunity</b></p> <p><b>WOODBIDGE, Ont.: Toronto District Christian High School</b> invites applications for a possible position as <b>full-time on site technologist</b>. The beginning date is negotiable, however it must be some time <b>before September 1999</b>. Please send resume, credentials and statement of faith to: <b>Ren Siebenga</b> c/o Toronto District Christian High School 377 Woodbridge Ave. Woodbridge, ON L4L 2S8</p>																
<p><b>Obituaries</b></p> <p>"Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God." (Ps. 43:5) On Tuesday, July 20, 1999, the Lord took unto himself, <b>MARIA P. HUIBERS</b> in her 90<sup>th</sup> year. Beloved wife of the late Everard Huibers. Loving mother of Eva &amp; Robert Schinkel - London, Ont. John &amp; Wilma Huibers - Trenton, Ont. Chuck &amp; Ingrid Huibers - Simcoe, Ont. Lovingly remembered by her 10 grandchildren and 23 great-grandchildren. Also loved by one brother and five sisters. Correspondence address: Mrs. Eva Schinkel, 366 Avondale Rd., London, ON N5W 5B5</p>	<p><b>Advertise in our monthly Business Directory for only \$25 plus GST.</b></p>	<p><b>For our Calendar of Events, please turn to page 27.</b></p>																



## Classifieds

Anniversary	Teacher	Job Opportunities
	<p><b>OAKVILLE, Ont.: Oakville Christian School</b> requires a part-time (75%) French teacher for <b>September 1999</b>. Please call the Principal.  <b>Oakville Christian School</b>  <b>112 Third Line</b>  <b>Oakville, ON L6L 3Z6</b>  <b>phone: 905-825-1247</b></p>	<p>The goal of the youth ministry at Maranatha Christian Reformed Church in Cambridge, Ontario, Canada is to help our youth grow in Christian faith, knowledge, fellowship and service to others.</p> <p>Our congregation is prayerfully seeking a non-ordained <i>Youth Director</i> to build upon our existing youth programs. This is a half-time position. If you enjoy spending time with young people, please reply in writing and in confidence by September 7, 1999 (include a brief statement of personal faith with your application) to:  <b>Youth Director Search Committee</b>  <b>Maranatha Christian Reformed Church</b>  <b>c/o Dave McDonald</b>  <b>380 Dundas St. S., RR 1</b>  <b>Cambridge, ON N1R 5R2 Canada</b>  <b>519-621-3731</b>          A detailed job description is available by calling the above telephone number or fax 519-621-4623 or e-mail <a href="mailto:daveannmcd@golden.net">daveannmcd@golden.net</a></p>
	<p>Miscellaneous</p>	
	<p><b>CLINTON, ONTARIO ADULT LIFE LEASE RESIDENCES</b>          available 936 sq.ft. to 1235 sq.ft. Fully wheelchair accessible, sprinkler system, central air, security throughout building. Dutch and English spoken. For more info. call (519) 233-7296 or (519) 482-7862.</p> <p><b>Special Offer for Seniors in 1999</b>          Record the location of your documents and possessions in one place for your family and your executors. The book is . . .  <b>Family Documents</b>          available in bookstores everywhere          Paperback \$9.95 Hardcover \$24.95          Mail this ad with a cheque and we will pay the S &amp; H and GST!  <b>Waterside House Publishing</b>          714 Vine St. St.Catharines ON L2M 6Z6          Tel: 1-800-665-6420 905-935-5047          (This ad may be copied)</p>	
Hamilton Ont. 1949 August 18 1999	Grimsby Ont. 1999	Obituary
<p>With thankfulness to our heavenly Father, we announce the 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary of  <b>CLARENCE &amp; WILHELMINA VANDERHOUT</b>          (nee VANGEST)          "I will praise God's name in song, and glorify him with thanksgiving!"          (Ps. 69:30)          Nellie &amp; Henk Vyn - Ancaster          Brian &amp; Ellen, Stan, Allan, Sonia          Marlene &amp; Nick Kiers - Grimsby          Mike, Sandra, Dave, Sharon          Wilma &amp; John Lindeboom - Dunnville          Scott, Dan, Monique, Ben          Clarinda VanderDool - Grimsby          John, Jessica, James          Clarence &amp; Cheryl Vanderhout - Grimsby          Amber, Shannon, Aaron          one great-grandchild, Dillon Vyn          We are inviting family and friends to help us celebrate with an open house which will be held on Sat., Aug. 21, 1999, at the Alliance Church, 605 Hwy. 8 (Regional Rd. 81) in Stoney Creek, Ont. from 2-5 p.m.          Best wishes only. Your presence will be your gift to them.          Home address: 215 Kelson Ave., Grimsby, ON L3M 4E8</p>	<p>Uithuizen, Gr. Grimsby          the Neth. Ont.          Jan. 21, 1911- July 11, 1999          "In my Father's house are many rooms;...I am going there to prepare a place for you." (John 14:2)          On Sunday, July 11<sup>th</sup> at Shalom Manor, the Lord called to himself  <b>JAN TIMMER</b>          Dearly loved husband of Menny (Koiter),          the late Margretha (1964),          and the late Gertrude (1996).          Much loved Dad of          Anna &amp; Jim Heidinga - Ottawa          Aafke &amp; Bill Murray - St. Catharines          Jean &amp; Larry Steele - Cornwall          Opa of Edward, John, Margaret.          Great-Opa of Ryan, Sara.          Mr. Timmer will also be lovingly remembered by the Koiter family.          The funeral service was held on July 13<sup>th</sup> at Maranatha CRC, St. Catharines with Rev. Walter Van der Werf officiating. Interment in Woodlawn Cemetery, Cornwall.          Mailing address: Mrs. M. Timmer, Shalom Manor, 12 Bartlett Ave., Room 238, Grimsby, ON L3M 4N5.</p>	<p><b>BED &amp; BREAKFAST.</b> Beautiful Niagara. Easy walking distance from the Falls. Comfortable rooms. Superb breakfast. Dutch spoken.  <b>Joan &amp; Mike Havinga</b>  <b>905-358-3534</b></p> <p><b>Room for rent.</b> Includes full use of house, washer, dryer, etc... \$300/month. St. Catharines, Ont. 905-688-0082.</p>
		<p>Anniversaries</p>
		<p>1949 August 25 1999          With joy and thanksgiving to God we hope to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Mom &amp; Dad and Pake &amp; Beppe:  <b>STAN &amp; EVELYN VANDERWAL</b>          (nee WYMA)          We rejoice with them and pray that God will continue to bless them with good health.          With love from your family,          John &amp; Mel          Jessica, Allison, Lauren          Arlene &amp; Fred          Matthew, Adrienne, Erik          Gail &amp; Chris          Michelle, Katrina          Wayne &amp; Lonnie          Wade, Nicholas, Tateanna          Dave &amp; Lynda          There will be an open house on Wednesday, August 25, 1999, at their home: 210 Mill Rd., Goderich, ON N7A 3X8          "I lift up my eyes to the hills - where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth." (Ps. 121:1-2)</p>
Miscellaneous	Miscellaneous	Job Opportunities
<p><b>Fully equipped luxury condominium</b> at Cranberry Resort Collingwood. Tennis, pools, beaches, golf, cycling, hiking and more. 2 bedrooms, sleeps 7. \$600/week, \$300/weekend.          In Niagara call 905-386-6976, or Toronto 905-877-0408.</p>	<p><b>Evangelistic Materials in Arabic</b>          Also, in English,  <i>The Bible and Islam</i>  <b>\$5.95 Canada / \$4.95 U.S.</b>          And a folder of essays on Understanding the Middle East (\$1.50)          Write:  <b>The Back to God Hour</b>  <b>P.O. Box 5070</b>  <b>Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8</b></p>	<p>The Georgetown Christian Reformed Church invites applications for  <b>A full-time Church Education Director</b>          to provide coordination, direction and leadership for our church education program which spans all ages.</p> <p>Applicants must demonstrate a sound Reformed world and life view and have good organizational ability. A strong background in Christian education and membership in the Christian Reformed Church is a prerequisite. Full job description available upon request. hww@aztec-net.com</p>

Congratulations to Clarence & Wilhelmina Vanderhout on their 50th wedding anniversary.

Hamilton  
Ont.  
1949 August 18 1999  
With thankfulness to our heavenly Father, we announce the 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary of  
**CLARENCE & WILHELMINA VANDERHOUT**  
(nee VANGEST)  
"I will praise God's name in song, and glorify him with thanksgiving!"  
(Ps. 69:30)  
Nellie & Henk Vyn - Ancaster  
Brian & Ellen, Stan, Allan, Sonia  
Marlene & Nick Kiers - Grimsby  
Mike, Sandra, Dave, Sharon  
Wilma & John Lindeboom - Dunnville  
Scott, Dan, Monique, Ben  
Clarinda VanderDool - Grimsby  
John, Jessica, James  
Clarence & Cheryl Vanderhout - Grimsby  
Amber, Shannon, Aaron  
one great-grandchild, Dillon Vyn  
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Best wishes only. Your presence will be your gift to them.  
Home address: 215 Kelson Ave., Grimsby, ON L3M 4E8

## Obituary

Uithuizen, Gr. Grimsby  
the Neth. Ont.  
Jan. 21, 1911- July 11, 1999  
"In my Father's house are many rooms;...I am going there to prepare a place for you." (John 14:2)  
On Sunday, July 11<sup>th</sup> at Shalom Manor, the Lord called to himself  
**JAN TIMMER**  
Dearly loved husband of Menny (Koiter),  
the late Margretha (1964),  
and the late Gertrude (1996).  
Much loved Dad of  
Anna & Jim Heidinga - Ottawa  
Aafke & Bill Murray - St. Catharines  
Jean & Larry Steele - Cornwall  
Opa of Edward, John, Margaret.  
Great-Opa of Ryan, Sara.  
Mr. Timmer will also be lovingly remembered by the Koiter family.  
The funeral service was held on July 13<sup>th</sup> at Maranatha CRC, St. Catharines with Rev. Walter Van der Werf officiating. Interment in Woodlawn Cemetery, Cornwall.  
Mailing address: Mrs. M. Timmer, Shalom Manor, 12 Bartlett Ave., Room 238, Grimsby, ON L3M 4N5.

## Miscellaneous

**Evangelistic Materials in Arabic**  
Also, in English,  
*The Bible and Islam*  
**\$5.95 Canada / \$4.95 U.S.**  
And a folder of essays on Understanding the Middle East (\$1.50)  
Write:  
**The Back to God Hour**  
**P.O. Box 5070**  
**Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8**

## Teacher

**OAKVILLE, Ont.: Oakville Christian School** requires a part-time (75%) French teacher for **September 1999**. Please call the Principal.  
**Oakville Christian School**  
**112 Third Line**  
**Oakville, ON L6L 3Z6**  
**phone: 905-825-1247**

## Miscellaneous

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714 Vine St. St.Catharines ON L2M 6Z6  
Tel: 1-800-665-6420 905-935-5047  
(This ad may be copied)

## Anniversaries

1949 August 25 1999  
With joy and thanksgiving to God we hope to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Mom & Dad and Pake & Beppe:

**STAN & EVELYN VANDERWAL**  
(nee WYMA)  
We rejoice with them and pray that God will continue to bless them with good health.

With love from your family,  
John & Mel  
Jessica, Allison, Lauren  
Arlene & Fred  
Matthew, Adrienne, Erik  
Gail & Chris  
Michelle, Katrina  
Wayne & Lonnie  
Wade, Nicholas, Tateanna  
Dave & Lynda

There will be an open house on Wednesday, August 25, 1999, at their home: 210 Mill Rd., Goderich, ON N7A 3X8  
"I lift up my eyes to the hills - where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth." (Ps. 121:1-2)

## Job Opportunities

The goal of the youth ministry at Maranatha Christian Reformed Church in Cambridge, Ontario, Canada is to help our youth grow in Christian faith, knowledge, fellowship and service to others.

Our congregation is prayerfully seeking a non-ordained

*Youth Director*  
to build upon our existing youth programs. This is a half-time position. If you enjoy spending time with young people, please reply in writing and in confidence by September 7, 1999 (include a brief statement of personal faith with your application) to:

**Youth Director Search Committee**  
**Maranatha Christian Reformed Church**  
**c/o Dave McDonald**  
**380 Dundas St. S., RR 1**  
**Cambridge, ON N1R 5R2 Canada**  
**519-621-3731**

A detailed job description is available by calling the above telephone number or fax 519-621-4623 or e-mail [daveannmcd@golden.net](mailto:daveannmcd@golden.net)



We are eagerly searching for a **YOUTH LEADER.**

We want someone motivated to organize us, have fun with us, teach us. Someone who is enthusiastic and alive for Christ.

The **YOUTH** at Bethel CRC, Waterdown, Ont. Canada

## Job Qualifications

- ① Minimum of a relevant university or bible college degree.
- ② Prior successful leader in youth work.
- ③ Proven ability to provide leadership and apply organizational skills.

## Interested?

Send resume to: Bethel Christian Reformed Church  
c/o Bethel Youth Ministry Committee  
Box 795, Waterdown, ON L0R 2H0 Canada

The Georgetown Christian Reformed Church invites applications for  
**A full-time Church Education Director**  
to provide coordination, direction and leadership for our church education program which spans all ages.

Applicants must demonstrate a sound Reformed world and life view and have good organizational ability. A strong background in Christian education and membership in the Christian Reformed Church is a prerequisite. Full job description available upon request. hww@aztec-net.com



## Classifieds

**CHRISTIAN CREDIT UNION LTD.**

Commercial/Agricultural Loans Officer (Closing Date: September 15, 1999)

**THE POSITION**

- Reports to the General Manager
- Under general supervision and within a team environment, is responsible for all credit granting functions within the commercial/Agricultural Lending area
- Analyze financial statements, operating cycle, profit level, cash flow projections and other factors or variables that affect viability and risk
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- Maintains the high-profile and positive image of the credit union as the financial institution of choice in the trading area

**THE PERSON**

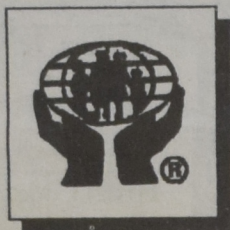
- Experienced in most facets of lending
- Strong analytical and problem solving skills
- Ability to coach and mentor others, with solid interpersonal skills
- Service and selling, interviewing skills, petition making, negotiations, loan monitoring and collections, budgeting and personal financial counselling
- Computer aptitude is a must
- Working knowledge of the Dutch language would be a positive attribute.

**COMPENSATION**

- Commensurate with qualifications and experience
- Full benefits are offered

**THE CREDIT UNION**

- Smoke-free work environment
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- Loans - \$28 Million
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- Members - 5,400
- Staff - 10.

**SUBMIT RESUME TO:**

Peter Lindhout,  
General Manager  
Christian Credit Union Ltd.  
10704 - 107 Ave.  
Edmonton, AB T5H 0W8  
fax: 780-426-7165  
e-mail: plindhout@alberta-cu.com

**Covenant Christian Reformed Church**

in St. Catharines, Ontario,  
is seeking to fill the position of

**MINISTRY DIRECTOR**

on a temporary basis for the coming year.

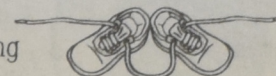
Our needs include the youth program, outreach, the church education program and possibly some pastoral work. We are willing to consider a full-time appointment or one or more part-time appointments to meet all aspects of our ministry needs.

For more information or to indicate an interest  
please contact Covenant CRC or call Geurt Vanden Dool  
298 Parnell Rd., St. Catharines, ON L2M 7W7  
at 905-562-3410 or Steve Collins at 905-935-3989.

Application deadline is August 15, 1999.

**Social Service Work**

Become a part of our team of committed professionals providing loving care for needy children.



**Mutual Support Systems**, a parent model network of rural group foster homes in the Niagara peninsula for children experiencing emotional and behavioural difficulties is searching for the following as part of its recent expansion.

1. **Residential Child Care Workers:** Related educational background is an asset. Competitive salary and benefits. This live-in position provides opportunities for out-of-province candidates.
2. **Group Foster Parents:** This full time position is suitable for a married couple and includes salaries, benefits and housing for both candidates.

**Please contact Randy Klassen at:**

Mutual Support Systems phone: 905-892-4332  
P.O. Box 397 e-mail: rklassen@mutualsupport.net  
Fenwick, ON L0S 1C0 Visit us at: <http://mutualsupport.net>

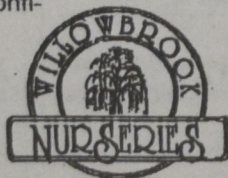
Wholesale nursery, growing ground covers, vines, perennials, evergreens, flowering shrubs and ornamental trees, is accepting applications for the position of

**Assistant Propagation Manager**

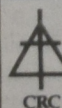
The propagation department is expanding with some exciting developments. This position requires experience, organizational skills and dedication. The propagation techniques used are grafting, seed germination, divisions, hardwood and softwood cuttings.

The successful candidate must have excellent communication and people skills, be a team player and a leader. Position is full time and opportunities exist for advancement. Excellent bonuses and benefit package commensurate with qualifications. A training period may be available. Resumes may be dropped off between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday or mailed in confidence with salary history to:

John Langendoen  
Willowbrook Nurseries Inc.  
1000 Balfour St.  
Fenwick, ON L0S 1C0  
No phone calls please.



**Your gift to Reformed Faith Witness is "tax receiptable" and will be greatly appreciated by the staff of Christian Courier, the board of Reformed Faith Witness, and all of our (potential new) subscribers! Make your cheque payable to Reformed Faith Witness.**

**The Living Word**

Sermons for reading services.

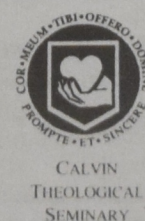
Contact:  
R. Vander Ploeg Secy/Treas.  
37 Brick Pond Lane  
Woodstock, ON N4Y 1G1  
Phone: (519) 539-2117

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(corner of Huggins Town & Country Plaza)

**Calvin Seminary Opening**

The Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees recently declared a vacancy in the field of **DOMESTIC MISSIOLOGY**.

Persons should have advanced training and experience in evangelism, church planting, new church development, or other areas related to spreading the gospel and building the church in North America.

A position description is available from the seminary president, to whom all correspondence should be directed at 3233 Burton Street, S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49546 USA, fax 616-957-8621. Inquiries will be received until September 30, 1999.



## Classifieds

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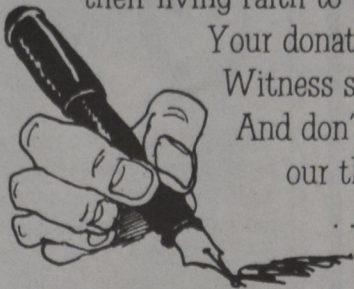
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helps Christians across North America apply their living faith to the business of living.

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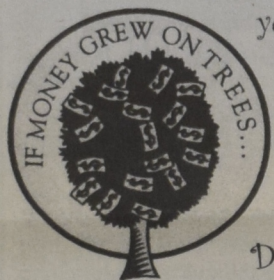
And don't forget – along with our thanks for your cheque

... we'll send you a tax receipt.\*



\*For donations of \$10 or more. Make cheque payable to Reformed Faith Witness. Receipts currently available for Canadian donations only.

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you wouldn't HAVE TO advertise your business, because you wouldn't HAVE TO work (except to tend the trees). But since money DOESN'T grow on trees, and because you are trying to operate your own business successfully – what about the Christian Courier Business

Directory? Reasonably priced (\$25.<sup>00</sup>), appearing monthly,

good regional exposure, fine company to be in, handy format for

readers, easy to do: phone 1-800-969-4838 toll free. Ask for Diane.

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This coupon and \$39.54\* will get you a year's worth of *Christian Courier*.

\* Include a cheque for \$39.54 (36.95 + GST)  
US Subscribers: \$31.60 in US Funds

**DRESS TALKS:  
but what does  
it say?**

September 6, 1999

*Don't look now – but what you're wearing is giving you away.* Submissions wanted for this back-to-work, back-to-school issue:

**Theoretical:** What does the way a person dresses say about that person, her beliefs, his worldview?

**Real Life:** Dressing kids for school – practicality or peer pressure? Help our readers understand what this is about – and what to do about it!

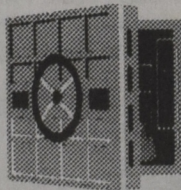
**Lifestyle:** How might a Christian "dress for success"? Does the Bible have anything to say re: modern dress?

**Dressing for church, or: Is the queen really coming for tea?** Anything from the whimsical to the ridiculous. Win the C.C. "I can't believe I wore that" T-shirt!

**Deadlines:**

Proposal: August 12, 1999

Manuscript: August 20, 1999

**THE WELL-  
TENDED  
TALENT:  
buried  
or used?**

September 20, 1999

*If the love of money is the root of all evil, how are you going to keep yourself – and your money – "safe"?*

**We need your writing assistance:**

1. "Investing for Christians": an insightful feature article on ethical funds, charitable trusts, good causes, what else?

2. "My Bank Account": a humorous piece on the sorrows of personal money management.

3. "Return on Investment": a new parable about talents and returns. Not more than 600 words. The writer of each published "parable" will get a free C.C. "I didn't hide my talents" T-shirt.

**Deadlines:**

Proposal to us: August 20, 1999

Manuscript: September 3, 1999

**MODELS FOR  
FAMILIES or: If it  
ain't broke,  
should we fix it?**

October 4, 1999

*What happened to the families we used to know? Are we going to be OK? Are our kids?*

Submissions requested:

**New family values:** What are they?

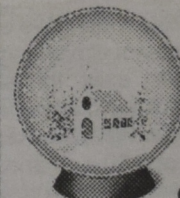
From DINKs (Double Income, No Kids) to SITCOMs (Single Income, Three Children, One Mortgage).

**Insight:** What are the Bible's "family values"? An analysis of traditional and contemporary family models.

**Personal:** "I was an only child (or, one of \_\_\_\_\_ children), and look at me now!"

**Photography contest:** "The Family Portrait" – a non-professional picture of your family, with 100 words for the caption. Each of 3 winners gets a C.C. personalized family photo mug.

**Deadlines:** Proposal to us by Sept. 4, and material by Sept. 13.

**A WELL-  
PRESERVED  
REFORMED  
WITNESS: but  
is it still warm?**

October 18, 1999

*What shape could our "reforming" take in the next millennium?*

Help us write our special Reformation Day issue! Provide us with:

**A feature article:** This is what John Calvin wondered when he came back for a 2-week tour of the 1990s CRC: "Reformed ... Evangelical ... Mainline ...: where is the CRC, where is it on the spectrum, and where is it going?"

**A Love Song:** "Reformed evangelism – a heartfelt proposal for the next millennium." Your passionate prose could win you \$100; or the C.C. Love Song T-shirt; or a free one-year subscription. Wow!

**Deadlines:**

Proposal to us: September 17, 1999

Manuscript: October 1, 1999



## Events/Classifieds

## Calendar of Events

Items appearing in this column are run free of charge if they advertise an admission-free event, if they accompany an ad for the same event, or at the discretion of CC. In case of free listing, space limitations apply. The charge otherwise is \$7.50 per line, or \$1.50 per line inch, per insertion.

- Aug. 19** Senior Day at Lakewood Christian Campground, RR 5, Forest, Ont. at 9:30 a.m. Speaker - Rev. J. Hellinga. Refreshments will be served, bring your own lunch.
- Sept. 12** Dutch Service, Rev. Henry DeBolster, Ancaster CRC, Hwy. 53, Ancaster, Ont., 3 p.m. (#)
- Oct. 31** Dutch Service, Rev. Jerry Hoytema, Ancaster CRC, Hwy. 53, Ancaster, Ont., 3 p.m. (#)

Advertise in our monthly  
Business Directory for  
only \$25 plus GST.



## Church News:

## Christian Reformed Church

Rev. H. de Ruiter of First Chilliwack CRC, Chilliwack, B.C., declined a call to Immanuel CRC, Hamilton, Ont.

The Seafarers Centre in Montreal, Quebec has an e-mail change. The new address is: seafarer@colba.net



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In Canada call Mrs. Henny Huiskamp at 613-393-5256

Students coming to London to study at  
the University of Western Ontario  
and Fanshawe College:



Welcome!

Student Welcome Service:  
First CRC, Talbot and Dufferin  
Sunday, September 12, 11 a.m.  
Cornerstone Student Fellowship:  
Wednesday evenings  
Student Retreat:  
October 1-3  
Inter-Varsity  
Graduate Student Fellowship

We are  
".....Overflowing With Thankfulness" (Col.2:7)  
and invite all former parents, students,  
staff and supporters to celebrate the  
40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of

## Willowdale Christian School

60 Hilda Ave.  
North York, ON M2M 1V5  
Saturday, September 25, 1999  
2:00 p.m. Open House  
4:00 p.m. Service of Celebration  
(Thanksgiving offering)  
6:00 p.m. Standing Reception  
(photos and memorabilia from 1959-1977 would be appreciated)

You are cordially invited to help us celebrate  
God's faithfulness on the  
50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of  
**Maranatha Christian Reformed Church**  
Woodstock, Ontario  
September 4, 1999  
Open House @ 3:00 p.m.  
at the church  
DINNER and PROGRAM @ 6:00 p.m.  
at John Knox Christian School

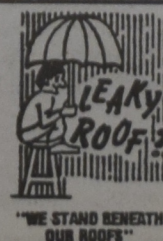
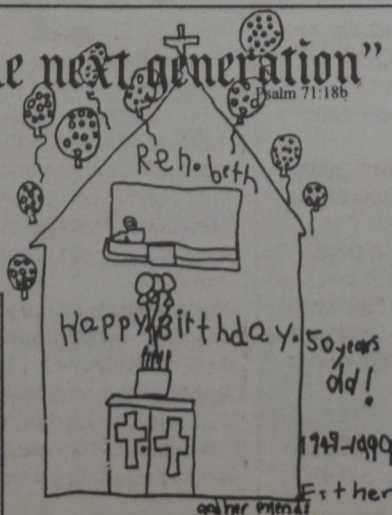
To reserve a seat at the dinner  
call Ann Henry @ 519-421-0156  
Dinner tickets - \$13.00/person, \$25.00 per couple  
"We are filled with the good things of God's House,  
of God's Holy Temple"

## "Declaring God's Power to the next generation"

### FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION Rehoboth Christian Reformed Church

130 Scugog Street, Bowmanville, ON L1C 3J6  
phone: 905-623-5032, fax: 905-623-8962  
e-mail: rehoboth@durham.net

Sat., September 4	Sunday,	Mon., September 6
50 <sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY	September 5	ANNIVERSARY
Open House in	50 <sup>th</sup>	PICNIC
church: 1:30 - 4:30	ANNIVERSARY	Orono Park, with
Celebration at	SERVICES	Maranatha. All
Garret B. Rickard	10 a.m.	"former" members
Centre: 6:30	and 7 p.m.	welcome!



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## News

# Witvoet confronted idols, focused on the Kingdom

Marian Van Til

Bert Witvoet came to *Christian Courier* – then *Calvinist Contact* – in 1982. The paper was in crisis, but Bert knew it and accepted the job anyway (or perhaps because of it).

CC has known crises, and the financial wolf has been seen now and then circling the door. But at that time, crisis loomed with a capital C. The paper, then owned by Knight Publishing, had been near bankruptcy.

Ownership was transferred to a handful of local businesspeople who, though not having to infuse actual funds into the operation, indicated with their signatures that they were willing to take that additional rescue step, if necessary.



Bert Witvoet

In the next months, through new business manager Stan de Jong's careful stewarding and new editor Bert Witvoet's straightforward leadership, the wolf was beaten back, and the paper that emerged under Bert's leadership has born his unmistakable imprint ever since. (*Christian Courier* now has official charitable status and is run by the non-profit organization formed for that purpose, Reformed Faith Witness.)

In remarks on July 17 honoring him at his retirement, Bert responded by telling the 125 or so assembled friends that he saw his 17-year editorship as having had two themes: one was an emphasis on discerning the idols in our lives and times; the other was a focus on the Kingdom of God and its coming to fruition in our work here and now.

## Uncovering 'nice' idols

That self-assessment is accurate, and the two themes dove-tailed nicely. Bert developed an acute ability to "test the spirits" of our time. And a knack for seeing the ways in which we tend to allow ordinarily good things to usurp God's place in our lives.

That allowed him to point out the many idol-wolves-in-sheep's-clothing which daily lure us away from our Shepherd: by our intent to pursue career success in a way which saps our energy, time and interests; through the envious acquiring of material goods from admirable houses to zippy computers; via a quest for personal fulfilment which may get us to fixate on fitness or shopping or sex or whatever; through a distaste for the work required to keep plodding down that hard, narrow path to sanctification; by enveloping ourselves in apathy about our secular world and by dismissing or ignoring our ability to confront it in any meaningful way.

## Weapons turned to fruit

Bert helped us by naming all those idols and more, and then by suggesting the weapons we might wield to eradicate them so that we might be ever more holy and effective citizens of the Kingdom of God.

Bert reminded us in any number of ways to put on – and how to

wear – the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the Sword of the Spirit, the belt of truth, the sandals of "readiness that come from the gospel of peace." And he helped us see, too, that by an amazing and ironic miracle, that battle dress and weaponry, proudly and properly worn, turns into something wholly other: fruit, of all things! The Spirit-fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

We're on the verge of new things here at *Christian Courier* (the specifics of which we will soon begin to reveal). But for a good crop, new seed needs fertile, tilled ground. Bert Witvoet's editorship has given us that. We are most grateful. We're ready to start sowing and watering anew here. And we trust that God will continue to give the increase.



"Anthem" and caricature by Harry der Nederlanden. Sung lustily on July 17, 1999, to the tune of the Dutch national anthem, Het Wilhelmus.

## The Bertsehelmus

Bert Witvoet of the *Courier*, my blood is made of ink, for years it's been my calling to make my readers think that I'm a king and prophet who sees what others don't. I've tried to make them obey me, but the lousy ingrates won't.

With my swift pen I've laboured to raise a monument to demonstrate my brilliance and vent my discontent. If all my editorials were stapled end to end, they'd either make you see visions or drive you round the bend.

Canadians round the country have called me many names, because the great tradition has fired me with its flames to roast the proud and famous and raise the humble eye designate in my memory a constellation in the sky.

Confusion, double-talk and grammar have been my constant foes; I've borrowed all their weapons and stricken many blows, for none can blow like Witvoet when he sits down to write: the demons flee from our champion: let all who read take flight.

## News Digest

### Ways to waste working time

TORONTO – All work and no play can make life dull, so 1002 *Ways to Waste Your Working Time* (McClelland & Stewart, \$13.99 Can.) may have just the diversion you're looking for. Here are some ideas from the satirical book, as reported in the *Toronto Star*:

- Re-tie your shoelaces;
- Test the pens on your desk;
- Make a shopping list for next Christmas
- Eavesdrop;
- Fill in your office calendar with things you'd like to be doing;
- Try to read a page of a book upside down;
- Try to remember what you did last week;
- Massage the bags under your eyes.

### Fortune-teller becomes evangelist

SAN JOSE, Cal. (Religion Today) – A Korean fortune-teller has become a Christian evangelist, San Jose, Calif.-based Partners International (PI) reports. The woman was a popular Buddhist leader and seer who for years had suffered with insomnia and headaches. Her daily sacrifices to idols made no difference. She began to attend the newly constructed Jindo Joahn Church and became a Christian during a Sunday worship service. Week after week, church members prayed over her and God healed her of her ailments, PI said, and she was so excited that she shares the love and mercy of God with other villagers.

### Mummy of an artist?

MADRID, Spain – A Spanish investigator plans to fingerprint the mummy found under a church altar in Madrid in 1994 to determine if it is the body of 17th-century painter Diego de Velazquez, reports the *Globe and Mail*.

Forensic anthropologists Jose Manuel Reverte will try to match a fingerprint found on one of the court artist's works with those of the mummified remains, which have yet to be exhumed. He has also written to museums around the world, asking them to check their Velazquez paintings for more fingerprints that might be used.

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